

DOCUMENTS ON  
BRITISH  
FOREIGN POLICY  
1919—1939

EDITED BY

E. L. WOODWARD, M.A., F.B.A.

*Professor of Modern History in the University  
of Oxford*

AND

ROHAN BUTLER, M.A.

*Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford*

ASSISTED BY

MARGARET LAMBERT, PH.D.

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## PREFACE

THIS volume covers the documentary record of British policy with regard to the Czechoslovak crisis from the announcement of Lord Runciman's Mission to the Munich Agreement. The Editor had to select and arrange the documents for the whole of Volumes I and II before he could fix upon a convenient dividing-line between the two volumes from the point of view of publication. It was therefore necessary in the preparatory stages to number the chapters and documents consecutively from the first chapter of Volume I to the record of the Munich Agreement which would conclude Volume II. After it became clear that a rough 'half-way' line would fall about the third week in July 1938, the Editor decided not to renumber the chapters and documents which would be included in Volume II, but to regard the two volumes as forming a continuous narrative. On the other hand, it was found impossible, without making Volume II too large and unwieldy, to include all the material covering the Polish and Hungarian demands upon the Czechoslovak Government in September 1938. This material will be printed in Volume III; in any case, it is more usefully placed in Volume III, since the settlements with Poland and Hungary were negotiated after the Munich Agreement.

The conditions under which the Editors accepted the task of producing the volumes of this Collection, i.e. access to all papers in the Foreign Office Archives, and freedom in the selection and arrangement of documents, continue to be fulfilled.

The Editor is again grateful to the staff of the Reference Room of the Foreign Office Library, and to other officials who have assisted in tracking documents. He would like to thank Miss E. McIntosh, M.B.E., for secretarial help, and for the heavy work of compiling the table of contents of the volume; and to thank Miss A. W. Orde for general assistance in dealing with the proofs. Finally, it is his pleasant historical duty to record the very important, and indeed invaluable, part taken by the Hon. Margaret Lambert, Ph.D., as Assistant Editor at every stage in the preparation of the volume.

Volume II is divided into five chapters. The first chapter (Chapter VII in the continuous record) covers in 175 pages the first stage of Lord Runciman's negotiations in Prague, and ends with Sir J. Simon's speech at Lanark on August 27, 1938. This speech, which had in view the large-scale military measures already taken by the German Government, contained a warning that German aggression against Czechoslovakia might well involve Great Britain in war.

From this point the situation developed rapidly to its crisis. The German military measures were intensified and, in spite of far-reaching concessions on the Czechoslovak side, the negotiations with the Sudeten Germans broke down. Chapter VIII (pages 176-314) describes the efforts of His Majesty's

Government to restrain Herr Hitler, and at the same time to persuade the Czechoslovak Government to offer terms which would satisfy all reasonable demands from the Sudeten Germans. On September 13, after it appeared that no other plan would avert the immediate danger of war, and that the French Government were willing to accept almost any alternative to war, Mr. Chamberlain decided to propose a personal meeting between himself and Herr Hitler.

Chapter IX (pages 315-445) deals with the period from the evening of September 13 to the evening of September 21. The chapter includes Mr. Chamberlain's own notes and also the German record of the meeting with Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden; a record of the Anglo-French conversations in London on September 18, after which the two Governments recommended the Czechoslovak Government to accept the annexation by Germany of the Sudeten territories, and the correspondence leading to the decision of the Czechoslovak Government on September 21 to make this surrender.

Chapter X (pages 446-542) continues the story from September 21 to the afternoon of September 26. It thus includes an account of Mr. Chamberlain's second visit to Germany and of his conversations and exchanges of notes with Herr Hitler at Godesberg. After Mr. Chamberlain's return another Anglo-French meeting was held in London, and further exchanges took place with the Czechoslovak Government.

Chapter XI (pages 543-645) covers the critical days from the evening of September 26 to the signature of the Munich Agreement during the night of September 29/30, and the signature on the following day by Mr. Chamberlain and Herr Hitler, at the former's suggestion, of a declaration on Anglo-German relations. This chapter contains the records made by Sir H. Wilson of his interviews with Herr Hitler on September 26 and 27, and of the proceedings at the Munich Conference.

The appendixes include (i) six letters from Sir N. Henderson in addition to the letters included elsewhere in the text of the volume, and a note on his experiences at Nuremberg; (ii) additional correspondence on Lord Runciman's Mission; (iii) the Prime Minister's statement to the British Press on September 11; (iv) additional correspondence on unofficial German approaches to His Majesty's Government during August and September 1938.

*March 1949*

E. L. WOODWARD

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- I. Sketch map based on the Memorandum handed to the Prime Minister by Herr Hitler on September 23, 1938 *At end*
- II. Sketch map based on the map annexed to the Agreement signed at Munich on September 29/30, 1938 „

# CHAPTER SUMMARIES

## CHAPTER VII

German military measures: Lord Runciman's negotiations in Prague: Sir J. Simon's speech at Lanark on August 27. (July 24-August 27, 1938.)

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
538	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 327 Saving	July 23	Reports representations to President Benes by French Minister on July 19 on instructions of M. Bonnet.	1
539	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 325	July 24	Suggests that if Secretary of State makes parliamentary statement about Czechoslovakia on July 27 it should not take the form of repetition of warning given on May 21.	2
540	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 397	July 25	Points out that Czechoslovak Government's acceptance of mediator has shown their desire to bring about a solution of the Sudeten problem.	2
541	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 298	July 25	Instructions to inform German Government of Lord Runciman's Mission and to ask their support in urging Sudeten German leaders to co-operate with him.	3
542	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 206	July 25	Instructions to take steps to secure the co-operation of Sudeten leaders with Lord Runciman.	4
543	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 207	July 25	Transmits summary of reply given to representative of Sudeten Party regarding their request for certain assurances from Czechoslovak Government.	5
544	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 329	July 25	Reports that State Secretary has been informed of proposal to send Lord Runciman to Prague: Herr von Weizsäcker said that he did not think German Government would raise objection but that official reply would be sent later.	6
545	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 401	July 26	Refers to No. 542 and reports action taken: states that communiqué regarding Lord Runciman's Mission was issued on evening of July 25.	6
546	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 209	July 26	Transmits substance of statement made in House of Commons by Prime Minister regarding Lord Runciman's Mission.	7
547	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 407	July 26	Reports interview with Herr Kundt who seemed well disposed towards Lord Runciman's Mission.	8
548	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 331 Saving	July 26	Draws attention to account of alleged Czech military movements made by German State Secretary and to allegations broadcast on wireless: no truth in statements according to Observers sent to investigate.	8

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
549 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 332 Saving	July 26	Reports that general conclusion of Observers in Sudeten territories is that the Sudeten Germans in favour of being incorporated in the Reich are in a majority, but not in an overwhelming one. H.M. Consul at Liberec reports that moderate elements in Sudeten Party there are gaining ground.	9
550 MR. NEWTON Prague No. 265	July 26	Transmits Note Verbale from Czechoslovak Minister for Foreign Affairs agreeing to Lord Runciman's Mission.	10
551 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	July 26	Letter to Secretary of State expressing his opinion that Germans, apart from a section of extremists, are very much against war: stresses necessity for impressing upon President Benes that new Statute must be a genuine Nationalities Statute.	10
552 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 332	July 27	Refers to No. 544 and reports message received from State Secretary regarding attitude of German Government respecting Lord Runciman's Mission.	13
553 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	July 27	Letter to Mr. Strang enclosing a detailed commentary and general remarks by Military Attaché on points raised in Mr. Strang's letter of July 21 regarding Germany's military preparations.	13
554 TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 302	July 28	Draws attention to passage from speech of Secretary of State in House of Lords on July 27 regarding Lord Runciman's Mission and necessity for atmosphere of calm and confidence.	17
555 TO MR. CAMPBELL Paris Tel. No. 188 Saving	July 28	Instructions to inform French Government of attitude of Herr Kundt and of German Government regarding appointment of Lord Runciman and of arrival of latter in Prague on August 3.	18
556 TO HERR VON RIBBENTROP Berlin	July 28	Letter from Secretary of State expressing regret that reports of Lord Runciman's Mission should have appeared in Press before reaching Herr von Ribbentrop, but hopes that German Government will encourage and assist the Mission.	18
557 TO MR. CAMPBELL Paris No. 1675	July 28	Transmits record of conversation of Secretary of State with French Ambassador regarding Lord Runciman's Mission.	19
558 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	July 28	Letter to Mr. Strang informing him of rumour of a movement among forward sections of Nazi party, including Herr von Ribbentrop, to stage a test mobilization on August 15: transmits minute by Military Attaché on article in 'Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung' which bears on the question.	*21

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
559 To MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 212	July 29	Transmits list of measures which, if adopted by Czechoslovak Government, would, according to Herr Henlein, relieve the existing tension: asks Mr. Newton to take matter up with President of the Council.	23
560 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 335	July 30	Reports conversation with State Secretary and Dr. Schacht regarding situation: both took view that despatch of Lord Runciman involved a heavy responsibility for H.M.G. States opinion that there is growing uneasiness in moderate circles and increasing activity in extremist party.	23
561 MR. SHONE Bled Tel. No. 1	July 30	Reports communication made by Minister of Court on behalf of President of Council regarding attitude of President of Czechoslovakia in negotiations between Czechoslovak Government and Sudeten Germans.	25
562 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 337	Aug. 1	Transmits text of communiqué issued on July 30 foreshadowing a decree the effect of which will be to bar practically the entire western frontier area to members of all foreign military, naval, and air forces.	26
563 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 338	Aug. 1	Refers to No. 562 and reports information regarding prohibited areas given to Military Attaché by German War Office.	27
564 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 340	Aug. 1	Reports information given to Military Attaché by German War Office as to German intentions regarding calling up and training of reservists.	27
565 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 415	Aug. 1	Refers to No. 559 and transmits observations on suggested measures.	28
566 MR. NEWTON Prague No. 273	Aug. 2	Transmits despatch from H.M. Consul, Liberec, respecting the trend of opinion among Sudeten Germans.	29
567 MR. NEWTON Prague No. 276	Aug. 2	Submits impressions of the state of Czechoslovak public opinion.	33
568 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	Aug. 2	Letter to Mr. Strang explaining his suggestion for a Four-Power Conference in event of Lord Runciman's Mission leading to no result.	35
569 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 416	Aug. 3	Reports President Benes' assurance that he wished Lord Runciman to feel that he had complete liberty, that all facilities were at his disposal and that he (President Benes) would be pleased to see him at any time and give him any help in his power.	36
570 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 417	Aug. 3	Reports that President Benes' attention has been drawn to speech of Secretary of State in House of Lords on July 27.	37
571 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 418	Aug. 3	Transmits summary of conversation between President Benes and German Minister on July 27.	37



	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
572	MR. CAMPBELL Paris Tel. No. 495 Saving	Aug. 3	Reports conversation with M.F.A. regarding Lord Runciman's mission.	38
573	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 361 Saving	Aug. 3	Transmits observations on decision of German Government to bring seven or eight divisions in Germany and all forces in Austria up to war strength in September. Repeats opinion that any proposed solution of Sudeten problem which does not comply with the principle of a State of Nationalities will never be accepted.	39
574	MR. CHAMBERLAIN	Aug. 3	Letter to German Ambassador expressing the hope that Herr Hitler may be acquainted with the main points covered in their recent conversation and that the contents of Lord Halifax's personal letter to Herr von Ribbentrop regarding Lord Runciman's Mission may receive the Chancellor's consideration.	41
575	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 814	Aug. 3	Transmits despatch from Military Attaché regarding the projected partial mobilization of the German army in September.	41
576	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	Aug. 3	Letter to Secretary of State expressing anxiety over German military measures contemplated for September.	45
577	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 343	Aug. 4	Transmits message from Military Attaché regarding projected partial mobilization of German army in September.	46
578	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 344	Aug. 4	Reports that Military Attaché has obtained official confirmation of intended action of German army regarding calling up of reservists.	47
579	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 345	Aug. 4	Reports that Military Attaché has been informed unofficially that no motor travel will be allowed to regular officers of foreign armies in recently prohibited areas on western frontier.	47
580	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 346	Aug. 4	Reports information received by Military Attaché that training programme of nearly all pioneer units in German Army had been cancelled and that most of them had been sent to work on defences in frontier sectors.	48
581	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 348	Aug. 4	Reports conversations with German Ambassador in London and Italian Ambassador in Berlin regarding military measures contemplated by German War Office in September.	48
582	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 358 Saving	Aug. 4	Reports that Lord Runciman's arrival in Prague on August 3 has been prominently reported in Press: Sudeten German Party's press bureau have issued a communiqué giving Dr. Hodza's answer to questions put to him by Herr Kundt on July 29.	49

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
583 VISCOUNT RUNCIMAN Prague	Aug. 4	Letter to Secretary of State describing his first impressions on arrival in Prague and enclosing text of statement issued to the Press.	50
584 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 351	Aug. 5	Reports that he regards appearance of article in 'Völkischer Beobachter' (see No. 585) as welcome and significant.	51
585 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 369 Saving	Aug. 5	Transmits translation of extract from article in 'Völkischer Beobachter' describing reasons for coming autumn manoeuvres of German army and way in which they will be carried out.	52
586 To MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 30 Saving	Aug. 5	Instructions to draw attention of Czechoslovak Government to passage in speech of Secretary of State in House of Lords on July 27 regarding Lord Runciman's Mission.	53
587 To SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	Aug. 5	Letter from Secretary of State giving his impressions and views on situation.	54
588 VISCOUNT RUNCIMAN Prague	Aug. 5	Letter to Secretary of State describing progress of negotiations.	56
589 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 352	Aug. 6	Reports visit of General Sir Ian Hamilton to Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden.	57
590 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	Aug. 6	Letter to Secretary of State reiterating his belief that the Germans do not want war but that situation is very delicate: hopes that Lord Runciman will make a pronouncement before Nuremberg Party Congress.	58
591 GERMAN AMBASSADOR	Aug. 7	Letter to Prime Minister acknowledging No. 574 and stating that he hopes to give Herr Hitler further details concerning the points covered in their conversation.	60
592 To SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 309	Aug. 8	Asks Sir N. Henderson whether he has discussed proposed German mobilization measures with his French colleague and whether latter has given any indication of the reports he has sent to the French Government.	61
593 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 839	Aug. 8	Transmits despatch from Military Attaché surveying the situation created by the German decision to carry out partial mobilization during the autumn.	61
594 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	Aug. 8	Letter to Secretary of State expressing his fears that unless a settlement is arrived at soon it will be too late.	63
595 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 838	Aug. 8	Transmits memorandum by Military Attaché reporting views of Rittmeister von Koerber (a former supporter of Herr Hitler) regarding present situation: latter is of opinion that Chancellor has already decided on war in September.	65
596 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 354	Aug. 9	Reports that he has not discussed German military measures with French Ambassador but expects to see him later in the day and will find out his views.	67

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
597	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 356	Aug. 9	Reports conversation with French Ambassador regarding German military measures.	68
598	MR. ASHTON-GWATKIN Prague	Aug. 9	Letter to Mr. Strang describing events during first week of Lord Runciman's Mission in Prague.	69
599	TO MR. CAMPBELL Paris Tel. No. 240	Aug. 10	Instructions to ask Minister for Foreign Affairs whether he has any information about the scope of the proposed German military manoeuvres mentioned in article in 'Völkischer Beobachter' of August 5.	71
600	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 311	Aug. 10	Asks for telegraphic summaries of any articles in the German Press about the proposed military measures in addition to information already sent (see No. 585).	71
601	MR. CAMPBELL Paris Tel. No. 505 Saving	Aug. 10	Reports views of M.F.A. on suggestions put forward by H.M.G. for remodelling Czechoslovakia's treaty relations.	71
602	VISCOUNT RUNCIMAN Prague	Aug. 10	Letter to Secretary of State describing progress of events; fears success depends on whether or not Herr Hitler wants to go to war.	74
603	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 427	Aug. 11	Transmits message for Mr. Strang from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin reporting refusal of Sudeten Delegation to negotiate with Committee of Six Deputies or any body other than Political Council of the Cabinet: Government considering situation.	75
604	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 312	Aug. 11	States Military Attaché, who will arrive in Berlin at 4 p.m. on August 12, is bringing instructions which should be acted on at once.	76
605	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 429	Aug. 11	Reports story received from M.F.A. to effect that Herr Hitler had presided over a meeting of the Party and military leaders about July 15 when it was decided to take military action by end of September.	76
606	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 357	Aug. 11	Refers to No. 600 and reports that article already sent has appeared in a number of papers all over the country; expresses opinion that no further attention will be devoted to matter until date of beginning of exercise is announced.	77
607	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 222	Aug. 11	Instructions to pass on to French colleague for communication to French Government information regarding progress of Lord Runciman's discussions.	77
608	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 1317	Aug. 11	Transmits memorandum for immediate communication to Herr Hitler appealing to him to modify his military measures in the interests of the peace of Europe.	78
609	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 431	Aug. 12	Transmits message from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin for Mr. Strang that, according to Sudeten Delegation, discussions with Czechoslovak Government would open at 5 p.m. on August 11.	80

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
610 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 436	Aug. 12	Transmits translation of an extract from a manifesto issued by the Officers' Association and published in the Press declaring that the authority of the State must in no circumstances be undermined.	81
611 VISCOUNT RUNCIMAN Prague	Aug. 12	Letter to Secretary of State reporting progress of negotiations.	81
612 To Mr. NORTON Warsaw No. 336	Aug. 12	Transmits summary of conversation of Polish Chargé d'Affaires with Sir O. Sargent regarding Polish minority in Czechoslovakia.	82
613 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	Aug. 12	Letter to Secretary of State transmitting his views on points raised in the Secretary of State's letter of August 5 (No. 587).	83
614 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 360	Aug. 13	Refers to No. 608 and reports action taken.	87
615 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 438	Aug. 13	Reports information received from Lord Allen of Hurtwood regarding his recent interview with Herr von Ribbentrop.	88
616 H.M. CONSUL-GENERAL Munich Tel. No. 6	Aug. 13	Reports that he continues to receive news from various sources indicating that something more than a modified mobilization is being prepared.	89
617 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 439	Aug. 13	Reports M.F.A.'s comments on manifesto issued by Officers' Association.	89
618 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 442	Aug. 13	Reports information from Chief of Military Intelligence (i) that Sudeten Germans were about to be supplied with arms from Germany and (ii) that 'fiscal revolt' was likely to take place in Sudeten country at end of September which would lead to interference by German army.	90
619 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 444	Aug. 13	Reports that according to H.M. Consul, Liberec, there have been no visible signs of any increasing disregard for authority amongst Sudeten Germans in his area.	91
620 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 362	Aug. 13	Conveys message received from Herr von Ribbentrop, through Dr. Woermann, protesting against sending of memorandum direct to Chancellor instead of through M.F.A. Herr von Ribbentrop hoped that this course would be avoided in future.	91
621 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 363	Aug. 13	Reports consternation of Dr. Woermann regarding a Havas message from London, broadcast through Luxembourg radio station, respecting German military measures and inquiry by British Representative at Berlin as to their scope and object.	92
622 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 379 Saving	Aug. 13	Reports that Dr. Meissner, leading member of Coalition Committee, in conversation with a member of Legation staff, expressed himself in pessimistic terms regarding meeting with Sudeten Delegation on August 11.	93

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
623	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 380 Saving	Aug. 13	Reports refusal of leading members of Henlein Party to attend reception by M.F.A. in honour of Lord Runciman on the ground that they were in mourning for Henleinist killed at Hoesel.	93
624	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 382A Saving	Aug. 13	Reports that German Government have not so far made any reply to message given by President Benes to German Minister on July 27 (No. 571).	94
625	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 383 Saving	Aug. 13	Reports that in leaving extract from Secretary of State's speech of July 27 with M.F.A. he drew attention of Dr. Krofta to the recommendation of principle of partnership contained therein: reports remarks of M.F.A. in reply.	94
626	MR. CAMPBELL Paris	Aug. 13	Letter to Sir O. Sargent reporting a conversation with M. Massigli who raised the subject of Czechoslovak treaty relations and repeated that the French Government saw great danger in H.M.G.'s suggestions for a modification thereof.	95
627	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 364	Aug. 15	Transmits views as to reasons for German military measures.	97
628	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 450	Aug. 16	Reports that General Staff, while admitting seriousness of general situation, are not unduly apprehensive; an official of Ministry of Foreign Affairs believed military manoeuvres in Germany were not causing exceptional anxiety in Czechoslovakia: greater cause for anxiety was discovery that Reich was trying to arm Sudeten German population.	99
629	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 451	Aug. 17	Transmits message from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin reporting progress of negotiations.	100
630	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 316	Aug. 17	Instructions to inform either Dr. Lammers or German Ministry of Foreign Affairs that French Government are now to be told of communication made to Herr Hitler regarding recent German military measures.	100
631	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 399 Saving	Aug. 17	Reports information received by Military Attaché to effect that Herr Hitler held a conference on August 15 at which Generals Keitel and von Brauchitsch were present to discuss foreign reaction to mobilization measures.	101
632	SIR N. CHARLES Rome Tel. No. 176 Saving	Aug. 17	Reports that M.F.A., in reply to a question as to the intentions of Germany regarding Czechoslovakia, stated that position had not changed during past month or two: Germans did not want war and were waiting to see what would happen.	101

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
633	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 397 Saving	Aug. 17	Submits reasons why he considers it essential that Lord Runciman should give expression to some recommendation by the end of the month before the Nuremberg Rally.	102
634	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 864	Aug. 17	Reports information received regarding possible alteration for worse in tone of Press agitation against Czechoslovakia.	103
635	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 867	Aug. 17	Transmits copy of a minute by Military Attaché summarizing available information regarding development of German military measures.	103
636	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 1341	Aug. 17	Transmits account of representations made by German Chargé d'Affaires regarding the memorandum communicated to Herr Hitler, the letter from the Prime Minister to the German Ambassador of August 3, and the Havas report regarding German military measures.	105
637	TO VISCOUNT CHILSTON Moscow No. 498	Aug. 17	Transmits summary of conversation of Secretary of State with Soviet Ambassador regarding German intentions and progress of Lord Runciman's Mission.	107
638	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 369	Aug. 18	Submits reasons why he considers no communication should yet be made to French Government regarding memorandum communicated to Herr Hitler.	108
639	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 371	Aug. 18	Reports that State Secretary, in answer to an inquiry regarding a reply to the memorandum communicated to Herr Hitler, said that he had no information on the subject.	109
640	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 372	Aug. 18	Reports reply given to State Secretary in response to an inquiry regarding progress of Lord Runciman's Mission.	109
641	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 227	Aug. 18	Transmits instructions that Observers should refuse to investigate cases of alleged smuggling of arms.	110
642	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 453	Aug. 18	Transmits summary of Sudeten German Press article dealing with Herr Kundt's reply to President of Council at meeting between Czechoslovak Government and Sudeten German Party representatives on August 17.	110
643	TO VISCOUNT RUNCIMAN Prague	Aug. 18	Letter from Secretary of State acknowledging various letters and considering different courses which might be open to Lord Runciman: asks what Lord Runciman thinks he might do in the event of a breakdown in the negotiations.	111
644	VISCOUNT RUNCIMAN Prague	Aug. 18	Letter to Secretary of State describing work of Mission and its relations with Czechoslovak Government: believes that he has gained confidence of both sides though unable to record any progress towards agreement.	115

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
645	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 454	Aug. 19	Refers to No. 642 and considers that Herr Kundt did not appear to wish to break off negotiations.	116
646	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 455	Aug. 19	Reports that Czechoslovak Government have decided to re-examine question of three years' military service and that a decision will be taken next week or in ten days.	116
647	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 375	Aug. 19	Explains in greater detail reasons for hoping that French Government will not be informed at this stage of memorandum communicated to Herr Hitler. Reports that Admiral Horthy's visit begins on August 21 and lasts for 10 days.	116
648	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 319	Aug. 19	Refers to No. 638 and states that French Government will be told of communication to Herr Hitler if they raise subject of German military measures: Ministry of Foreign Affairs may be so informed.	118
649	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 378	Aug. 19	Reports Italian Ambassador's consternation at suggestion that Lord Runciman might stay at Prague for three months before arriving at any agreed solution: situation in Italian Ambassador's view too dangerous to admit of delay.	119
650	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 376	Aug. 19	Reports conversation between Military Attaché and German Chief of Intelligence at Ministry of War regarding German military manoeuvres.	120
651	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 457	Aug. 19	Transmits message from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin to Mr. Strang that Dr. Hodza has announced, in response to Lord Runciman's inquiry, that officials of Sudeten German nationality have been appointed to some posts of importance in postal and internal administration.	121
652	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 458	Aug. 19	Refers to No. 651 and transmits further message for Mr. Strang from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin recording points made by Herr Henlein in talk with Lord Runciman.	122
653	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 381	Aug. 20	Reports that French Air Mission under General Vuillemin had good reception in Berlin: records conversation of General Vuillemin with Field-Marshal Göring.	122
654	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 382	Aug. 20	Refers to No. 648 and reports action taken.	123
655	MR. CAMPBELL Paris Tel. No. 524 Saving	Aug. 20	Reports conversation with Political Director of Ministry of Foreign Affairs in which latter gave an account of General Vuillemin's conversation with Field-Marshal Göring.	124

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
656 MR. CAMPBELL Paris Tel. No. 525 Saving	Aug. 20	Reports that French Government have recently been urging on Czechoslovak Government the view that it would be unwise to bring in a law establishing a three years' military service and that it would be better to retain with the colours the class due to be disbanded at the end of September.	124
657 MR. CAMPBELL Paris Tel. No. 526 Saving	Aug. 20	Reports that, according to the French Minister at Prague, President Benes has been greatly impressed by Lord Runciman.	125
658 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 385	Aug. 21	Reports information received by Military Attaché to effect that at a meeting at Döberitz attended by all commanding generals, Herr Hitler announced his intention of attacking Czechoslovakia towards end of September.	125
659 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 386	Aug. 21	Reports observations of Head of German Attaché Group to Assistant Military Attaché at Dresden regarding the urgency of finding a solution to the Sudeten question.	126
660 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 387	Aug. 21	Reports observations of Military Attaché regarding his visit to Hanover-Brunswick area.	127
661 HERR VON RIBBENTROP Berlin	Aug. 21	Letter to Secretary of State in reply to No. 556: protests against way in which Lord Runciman's Mission was decided upon without reference to German Government: expresses astonishment at manner in which memorandum of August 12 was communicated to Herr Hitler and points out that German Government cannot enter upon any discussion regarding internal military measures.	127
662 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 388	Aug. 22	Stresses need for Lord Runciman to make some pronouncement as to basis on which a settlement of Sudeten dispute may be reached before Herr Hitler's speech at Nuremberg.	129
663 SIR N. CHARLES Rome Tel. No. 552	Aug. 22	Reports opinion of Italian M.F.A. regarding Czechoslovak crisis: Count Ciano sure that Germany did not desire war but that matter rested entirely in hands of Czechoslovak Government.	130
664 SIR N. CHARLES Rome Tel. No. 553	Aug. 22	Reports that Italian Government appear to be taking no measures towards keeping army in special state of preparedness during the next two months.	131
665 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	Aug. 22	Letter to Secretary of State emphasizing his anxiety regarding situation and pointing out need for a statement by Lord Runciman before Nuremberg meeting.	131



NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
666 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	Aug. 22	Letter to Secretary of State reporting his opinion that Herr Hitler does not intend to answer communication made to him on August 12 regarding German military measures. Stresses again necessity for Lord Runciman to make some pronouncement and points out that only peaceable solution will be one that will ensue that Sudetens govern themselves.	134
667 MR. SHONE Bled Tel. No. 7	Aug. 23	Reports that oral communication has been made to Yugoslav and Roumanian Governments by German Ministers at Belgrade and Bucharest to effect that if, as a result of action which Germany might take to settle Sudeten question, French Government were to intervene militarily in support of Czechoslovak Government, German Government would regard French action as aggression.	135
668 TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 233	Aug. 23	Instructions to report by telegram Lord Runciman's views on Sir N. Henderson's recommendation that he should make some public pronouncement before Nazi Party meeting at Nuremberg on September 5.	136
669 MR. TORR The Vatican Tel. No. 20	Aug. 23	Reports Cardinal Secretary of State's belief that Italian Government had told German Government that if latter insisted on forcing issue in Czechoslovakia they should not expect support of Italy.	136
670 TO MR. SHONE Bled Tel. No. 3	Aug. 23	Requests observations on report from French Chargé d'Affaires that Yugoslav and Roumanian Governments had received a verbal communication from German Government regarding action which latter would take if Sudeten problem not settled satisfactorily.	137
671 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 409 Saving	Aug. 23	Reports information given to French Military Attaché by German Ministry of War regarding retention of men with the colours and contradicting information previously given.	137
672 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	Aug. 23	Letter to Secretary of State expressing his views and fears as to outcome of Sudeten-Czechoslovak negotiations; considers that only hope for peace is absolute autonomy for Sudeten on Swiss cantonal lines.	138
673 VISCOUNT CHILSTON Moscow	Aug. 23	Letter to Mr. Collier reporting conversation of member of Embassy staff with German Ambassador's private secretary regarding the Czechoslovak crisis and attitude of Great Britain.	140
674 VISCOUNT RUNCIMAN Prague	Aug. 23	Letter to Secretary of State expressing a more hopeful view of situation.	142

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
675 Mr. NEWTON Prague No. 298	Aug. 23	Transmits record of a conversation between Military Attaché and German Military Attaché regarding Sudeten question: draws particular attention to Col. Toussaint's view that Sudeten Germans might appeal to Great Britain, France, Italy, and Germany on principle of self-determination.	143
676 Mr. NEWTON Prague No. 299	Aug. 23	Transmits report from Military Attaché describing his conversation with Italian Military Attaché regarding Sudeten problem: latter considered that only chance of avoiding war lay in summoning a conference of the Powers.	146
677 Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 462	Aug. 24	Refers to No. 668 and transmits observations, with which Lord Runciman concurs, on view of Sir N. Henderson that Lord Runciman should make a definite pronouncement before Nuremberg meeting.	148
678 To SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 325	Aug. 24	Instructions to report in London for a meeting on the morning of August 29.	148
679 To SIR R. LINDSAY Washington No. 701	Aug. 24	Transmits account of visit of U.S. Chargé d'Affaires who was given a general outline of the situation in Czechoslovakia as it appeared to H.M.G.: Secretary of State expressed hope that President might make another speech in next fortnight or three weeks, which would act as deterrent to Herr Hitler if he were planning aggressive action.	149
680 VISCOUNT RUNCIMAN Prague	Aug. 24	Letter to Secretary of State informing him that Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin will give him an account of latest developments on his arrival in London: expresses opinion that someone sent from London to Berlin would find ground for useful conversation.	149
681 Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 463	Aug. 25	Message for Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin from Mr. Stopford stating that Herr Kundt had said his conversation with President Benes on August 24 had been confined to a general discussion, but that they would discuss concrete questions next day: Herr Kundt said that there were two parts of the problem, the Sudeten question and relations between Czechoslovakia and the Reich.	150
682 Mr. SHONE Bled Tel. No. 12	Aug. 25	Transmits observations as requested in No. 670.	151
683 Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 464	Aug. 25	Refers to No. 670 and reports further details received from M.F.A. regarding German representations to Yugoslav and Roumanian Governments.	151
684 Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 466	Aug. 25	Transmits message for Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin recording views of a diplomatic personage regarding Sudeten German question.	152

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
685 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 467	Aug. 25	Transmits message for Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin from Lord Runciman that meetings on August 25 have gone favourably on solution of practical problems.	153
686 TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 235	Aug. 25	Transmits message for Lord Runciman expressing the view that present development as explained by Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin is more encouraging and completely changes the situation: approves of visit of Herr Henlein to Chancellor and suggests that Lord Runciman should offer to go to see Herr Hitler.	153
687 TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 236	Aug. 25	Transmits message for Lord Runciman suggesting text of telegram to be sent to Herr Hitler asking for interview.	155
688 TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 237	Aug. 25	Transmits message for Mr. Stopford from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin referring to No. 681 and expressing uneasiness at Herr Kundt's mention of two parts of problem.	155
689 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 415 Saving	Aug. 25	Submits for consideration proposal that Lord Runciman should report to H.M.G. that he intends to recommend to Czechoslovak Government cantonal autonomy as basis for negotiations.	156
690 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 413 Saving	Aug. 25	Reports M.F.A.'s account of Little Entente's negotiations with Hungary regarding minorities question, and of attitude of Yugoslavia and Roumania if German troops should march through Hungary.	157
691 TO MR. CAMPBELL Paris No. 1915	Aug. 25	Transmits account of conversation of Secretary of State with M. Cambon, French Chargé d'Affaires, regarding Czechoslovak problem; defines attitude of H.M.G.	158
692 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 899	Aug. 25	Transmits despatch from Military Attaché regarding chances of war between Germany and Czechoslovakia during coming autumn together with possible effect of British and French intervention.	160
693 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 468	Aug. 26	Refers to No. 683 and reports that according to M.F.A. similar representations had been made by German representative in Moscow and that Soviet reply had been a counter-warning that France would come to the assistance of Czechoslovakia; that Great Britain could hardly remain neutral and that Soviet Government would fulfil their obligations.	163
694 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 469	Aug. 26	Reports view that prospects of a solution of Sudeten problem will be enhanced if Herr Hitler can be brought out into the open and his responsibility for success of negotiations brought home to him.	164

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
695	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 471	Aug. 26	Transmits message from Lord Runciman for Secretary of State that he feels disadvantages of personal approach to Herr Hitler definitely outweigh advantages and that his position as independent negotiator would be compromised were he to ask for interview with Herr Hitler.	164
696	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 88 Saving	Aug. 26	Transmits account of progress made by Lord Runciman's Mission received from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin, and gives details of new basis of negotiation prepared under instructions of President Benes.	165
697	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 472	Aug. 26	Transmits summary of manifesto issued to Sudeten Party undersignatures of Herren Frank and Kollner regarding attacks on Sudetens by Marxist terrorists, and right of self-defence.	167
698	MR. ASHTON-GWATKIN London	Aug. 26	Note recording that Counsellor of French Embassy, in course of conversation with Sir O. Sargent on August 26, produced a message, which he said came from a Soviet official source, stating that M. Litvinov had told German Ambassador that if Czechoslovakia were attacked Soviet Union would go to her assistance under obligations of her treaty.	167
699	M. CAMBON London	Aug. 26	Letter to Sir O. Sargent explaining M. Bonnet's view that warning should be given to German Government in view of fact that they had informed Yugoslav and Roumanian Governments of their intention to intervene in Czechoslovakia if Sudeten question were not settled at once.	168
700	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 907	Aug. 26	Transmits report by Military Attaché recording conversation with Head of Attaché Group regarding Czechoslovak crisis: latter said that it was essential to find a speedy solution to Sudeten question.	169
701	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 390	Aug. 27	Refers to No. 694 and points out that Herr Hitler and Germany will not be satisfied with anything less than grant of genuine autonomy to Sudetens: considers it useless to approach Herr Hitler until it is known on what basis Lord Runciman is attempting to achieve an agreed settlement.	170
702	MR. TROUTBECK Prague Tel. No. 478	Aug. 27	Transmits message from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin for Mr. Strang that Lord Runciman has decided that Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin should tell Herr Henlein* that H.M.G. thought of sending an eminent statesman to see Herr Hitler: reports that Lord Runciman had an interview with President Benes on August 27 during which latter stated that his negotiations were proceeding satisfactorily.	170

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
703 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 420 Saving	Aug. 27	Reports concern of Italian Ambassador at a report that when Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin visited Prague he had informed his Government that Germany did not want war and was not in a condition to make it; transmits Italian Ambassador's estimate of situation.	171
704 TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 242	Aug. 27	Transmits text of Chancellor of Exchequer's speech at Lanark on August 27 dealing with foreign affairs in general and Czechoslovakia in particular.	172

## CHAPTER VIII

German military measures: breakdown of negotiations between the Czechoslovak Government and the Sudeten Germans: Mr. Chamberlain's decision to visit Herr Hitler. (August 28–September 13, 1938.)

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
705 MR. TROUTBECK Prague Tel. No. 424 Saving	Aug. 28	Refers to No. 697 and reports that manifesto will be considered by Committee of Political Ministers on August 30: hopes to obtain information from Sudeten side as to motive for manifesto and forwards his preliminary comments.	176
706 MR. TROUTBECK Prague Tel. No. 479	Aug. 29	Transmits message from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin for Mr. Strang that, according to Herr Frank, who has just returned from Berlin where he had two conversations with Herr Hitler, Chancellor would welcome visit from Herr Henlein provided latter can bring statement of what H.M.G. propose. Herr Henlein would like H.M.G. to notify Czechoslovak Government that they recommend the adoption of eight-point programme of Herr Henlein's Karlsbad speech.	177
707 MR. KIRKPATRICK Berlin Tel. No. 395	Aug. 29	Transmits summary of Herr Hess' speech on August 28 at Stuttgart.	178
708 VISCOUNT CHILSTON Moscow Tel. No. 161	Aug. 29	Reports that, according to German Embassy, Ambassador has made no formal <i>dé-marche</i> concerning Czechoslovak problem: transmits account of conversation of German Ambassador with M. Litvinov on August 28.	179
709 MR. FARQUHAR Bucharest Tel. No. 191	Aug. 29	Refers to No. 670 and reports information received from M.F.A. that German Minister made communication in question to him on August 14: M.F.A. regards communication as disquieting.	179

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
710 To Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 243	Aug. 29	Transmits observations on No. 706 for communication to Lord Runciman: considers that time has come for publication of Czechoslovak Government's proposals and asks Lord Runciman to make immediate representations to President Benes in this sense.	180
711 Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 483	Aug. 29	Refers to No. 706 and reports that he has discussed matter with Lord Runciman who asks that it should be made clear that he has not committed himself to these proposals in their present form: Lord Runciman sees nothing impracticable in acceptance of eight Karlsbad points as general basis.	182
712 Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 430 Saving	Aug. 29	Reports that in speech at Oberlütensdorf Herr Frank said that Sudeten Germans' final struggle had now commenced.	183
713 Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 428 Saving	Aug. 29	Reports reaction of Sudeten leaders to Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin's inquiry regarding manifesto of August 28: Sudeten German Press Bulletin contains long article justifying manifesto.	183
714 Sir G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin No. 911	Aug. 29	Transmits report from Military Attaché containing record of conversation with Captain von Albedyl, Acting Chief of Attaché Group.	184
715 Mr. NEWTON Prague No. 305	Aug. 29	Transmits despatch from Military Attaché respecting military aspect of possible grant of territorial autonomy to Sudeten Germans by Czechoslovak Government.	185
716 To Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 244	Aug. 30	Instructions to approach President Benes regarding publication of Czechoslovak Government's proposals should Lord Runciman decide not to put matter to him.	188
717 Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 485	Aug. 30	Transmits message from Lord Runciman stating that he has received from President Benes a written memorandum which purports to amplify new proposals but which in Lord Runciman's opinion has opposite effect; fears publication in this form would do more harm than good: Lord Runciman suggests that Herr Henlein might be informed of his readiness to produce a scheme by September 15 should two parties have failed to reach an agreement.	188
718 Mr. KIRKPATRICK Berlin Tel. No. 400	Aug. 30	Reports that in official circles in Berlin basis of German complaint against British attitude is that Germany is blamed in public and such pressure as is applied to Czechoslovakia is done in private.	189

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
719 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 488	Aug. 30	Reports appreciation of M.F.A. of Sir J. Simon's speech at Lanark: states Dr. Krofta had informed Press representatives of warning given by German diplomatic representatives in various capitals.	189
720 MR. NORTON Warsaw Tel. No. 62	Aug. 30	Reports interview with M. Beck who said that he realised difficulty and delicacy of Lord Runciman's task: M.F.A. stated that Poland expected that Polish minority should receive treatment equal to that of Sudeten Germans in any settlement.	190
721 MR. CAMPBELL Paris Tel. No. 220	Aug. 30	Reports interview of Military Attaché with Lt.-Col. Gauché, Head of Second Bureau, on August 30: latter took very serious view of situation.	190
722 MR. CAMPBELL Paris Tel. No. 223	Aug. 30	Reports that Czechoslovak Government have sent a General to discuss with General Gamelin question of introduction of three years' military service: so far General Gamelin has not convinced General that measure would be regarded as provocative.	192
723 LORD RUNCIMAN Prague	Aug. 30	Letter to Secretary of State expressing his anxiety at present situation.	192
724 To MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 245	Aug. 31	Refers to No. 717 and transmits message for Lord Runciman suggesting that he should put pressure on President Benes to publish proposals put forward by him last week: expresses opinion that Lord Runciman should publish his own scheme as soon as possible.	193
725 MR. CAMPBELL Paris Tel. No. 225	Aug. 31	Reports remarks of M.F.A. to effect that settlement of Sudeten question rested largely with H.M.G. French Government would support offer of H.M.G. to arbitrate on question, and would accept British proposal even if it were refused by Czechs.	194
726 To MR. CAMPBELL Paris Tel. No. 251	Aug. 31	Instructions to urge M. Bonnet to instruct French Minister at Prague to support Mr. Newton in representations he might make to President Benes regarding his proposals as set out in No. 696.	194
727 To MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 247	Aug. 31	Instructions to impress upon President Benes necessity, in view of approach of Nuremberg Conference, for Czechoslovak Government and Sudeten Delegation to agree without delay on bases of a comprehensive settlement: Lord Runciman to be consulted before representations are made. French Government being asked to instruct their Representative in Prague to join in representations.	195
728 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. Unnumbered	Aug. 31	Transmits personal message for Secretary of State from Lord Runciman stating that publication of Czech proposals at present time would be disastrous.	196

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
729 To Mr. CAMPBELL Paris No. 1972	Aug. 31	Transmits record of conversation with French Ambassador who gave account of French Government's attitude towards Czechoslovak crisis.	196
730 Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 493	Sept. 1	Transmits message from Lord Runciman recording latest position regarding negotiations: reports that he will urge President Benes to go to utmost limits to meet Sudeten proposals and warn him that if after next meeting with Herr Kundt no progress has been made, he will produce his own scheme.	198
731 Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 494	Sept. 1	Transmits message from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin for Mr. Strang reporting Herr Henlein's readiness to visit Herr Hitler and convey two messages from Lord Runciman: reasons for this step will be explained to President Benes by Lord Runciman who will ask that President should use his influence with Press to explain visit.	199
732 Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 495	Sept. 1	Transmits text of two messages to be conveyed by Herr Henlein to Herr Hitler.	200
733 Mr. CAMPBELL Paris Tel. No. 227	Sept. 1	Refers to No. 726 and reports action taken: M.F.A. promised to instruct French Minister in Prague to concert at once with Mr. Newton and strongly agreed with necessity for putting pressure on President Benes at this juncture.	201
734 Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 496	Sept. 1	Transmits message from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin for Mr. Strang stating his view of Herr Henlein's sincerity.	202
735 To Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 249	Sept. 1	Message for Lord Runciman that more moderate elements among Sudeten Germans and Dr. Kundt in particular would like to negotiate seriously on basis of present Czechoslovak offer, but that they distrusted Dr. Benes: suggests that Lord Runciman might see Dr. Kundt.	202
736 Sir N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 403	Sept. 1	Reports conversation with State Secretary regarding Czechoslovak crisis and latest measures taken by German Government, i.e. German naval manoeuvres and <i>démarche</i> made by German Ministers in Belgrade and Bucharest.	203
737 To Sir N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 339 AND Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 250	Sept. 1	Asks for comments regarding speech which Secretary of State proposes to make in which he would seek to dispel impression that Sir J. Simon's speech at Lanark was one-sided.	205



NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
738 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 405	Sept. 1	Reports conversation with M.F.A., before his departure for Berchtesgaden, regarding Czechoslovak crisis. Herr von Ribbentrop said no solution would now suffice unless it constituted a change of attitude in President Benes, and hinted that some impartial tribunal would be required as guarantee that any scheme put forward would be loyally executed.	205
739 TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 252	Sept. 1	Message for Lord Runciman pointing out advantages of publishing his scheme if agreement had not been reached before Nuremberg meeting.	206
740 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 497	Sept. 2	Reports that Lord Runciman has already drawn attention of President Benes to considerations advanced in No. 727 with exception of pressing him to make an immediate public offer: President Benes' attitude was conciliatory and encouraging. Submits observations with regard to immediate publication by Czechoslovak Government of an offer.	207
741 TO SIR R. LINDSAY Washington Tel. No. 597	Sept. 2	Transmits details regarding present position in Czechoslovakia with instructions to communicate them to the U.S. Secretary of State.	209
742 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 498	Sept. 2	Refers to No. 737 and transmits observations requested.	211
743 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 499	Sept. 2	Refers to No. 737 and transmits suggestions for use in speech.	212
744 TO SIR R. LINDSAY Washington Tel. No. 598	Sept. 2	Transmits account of conversations on August 30 and 31 of Prime Minister and of Secretary of State with U.S. Ambassador regarding Czechoslovak situation.	212
745 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 407	Sept. 2	Transmits observations asked for in No. 737.	214
746 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 501	Sept. 2	Reports that meeting between President and Sudeten German negotiators was unsatisfactory and that latter practically rejected President Benes' latest proposals and produced counter-proposals: next meeting to take place on September 5.	215
747 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 231	Sept. 2	Reports that he has informed M.F.A. of visit of Herr Henlein to Berlin: M. Bennet expressed his pleasure at Lord Runciman's action, and gave an account of his conversation with German Ambassador in which he had said that France would accept any solution proposed by Lord Runciman and that, if Czechoslovak Government would not agree, France would consider herself released from her engagements to Czechoslovakia.	215

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
748 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 408	Sept. 2	Reports that he inquired of M.F.A. whether it would be possible to speak to Herr Hitler during visit to Nuremberg and Herr von Ribbentrop replied that he would mention point to Chancellor. Requests authority to make what plans seem best regarding visit to Nuremberg.	216
749 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 65	Sept. 2	Reports views of M.F.A. regarding Czechoslovak situation. M. Beck still of opinion that Herr Hitler did not want a general war, but he was pessimistic as to possibility of a solution for Sudeten German and other minorities.	217
750 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 559 Saving	Sept. 2	Records views of U.S. Ambassador regarding Czechoslovak crisis and attitude of France, U.S.A., and Soviet Union.	218
751 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 561 Saving	Sept. 2	Reports information received from M.F.A. that Soviet Ambassador in Paris has been urging M. Bonnet to show more firmness over Czechoslovakia and to urge greater firmness on part of H.M.G. M. Bonnet considers that Russia wishes to stir up general war.	219
752 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 502	Sept. 3	Reports that he has informed President of Council of tenor of instructions contained in No. 727; Dr. Hodza stated that he realised need for making immediate and far-reaching concessions and indicated that it would assist him if formal representations were made to President Benes. Mr. Newton states that with concurrence of Lord Runciman he has made urgent application for audience.	220
753 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 503	Sept. 3	Reports that President Benes on September 2 expressed to Lord Runciman strong view that premature publication of an offer might wreck prospects of an agreement. Lord Runciman warned President that if it came to choice between acceptance of Karlsbad programme or war he should be under no illusion as to British choice.	221
754 SIR N. CHARLES Rome Tel. No. 561	Sept. 3	Reports that there are no indications in Rome to suggest that Italy might be preparing for large-scale military operations in near future.	221
755 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 504	Sept. 3	Transmits message from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin for Mr. Strang reporting acceptance by Herr Kundt of certain of President Benes' proposals: Herr Kundt stated that compromise was possible between the principles represented in President's proposals, viz. sovereignty and integrity of State, and principles of eight Karlsbad points.	222

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
756 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 505	Sept. 3	Transmits message from Lord Runciman containing summary of proposals which he is preparing.	223
757 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 930	Sept. 3	Reports conversation on August 26 with Baron von Neurath regarding Czechoslovak crisis and attitude of Germany. Baron von Neurath of opinion that Herr Hitler would not commit himself definitely at Nuremberg.	224
758 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 506	Sept. 4	Reports in detail audience with President Benes at which he explained views and attitude of H.M.G. regarding Sudeten question.	226
759 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. Unnumbered	Sept. 4	Continuation of No. 758. Mr. Newton hoped that some agreed communiqué could be issued next week recording view of both parties that they were making progress.	227
760 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 507	Sept. 4	Reports that during course of audience he pointed out that Czechoslovak Government had not implemented their promises in regard to appointment of German officials.	228
761 VISCOUNT CHILSTON Moscow Tel. No. 165	Sept. 4	Reports assurance given to Czechoslovak Minister by M. Litvinov that in event of Czechoslovakia being attacked and France being engaged, Soviet Union would fulfil her obligations. According to Czechoslovak Minister Soviet Government had suggested to French Government that latter should raise the question of German menace to Czechoslovakia at forthcoming meeting of Council of League of Nations.	229
762 TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 256	Sept. 4	Presumes that French colleague is being kept informed of representations made to President Benes.	230
763 TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 255	Sept. 4	Instructions to inform French Government of representations being made by H.M. Minister in Prague and to ask them to authorise French Minister to speak to President Benes in same sense.	230
764 TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 258	Sept. 4	Refers to No. 759 and concurs in issue of communiqué agreed between Czechoslovak Government and Sudeten representatives; if impossible to issue agreed communiqué suggests that Lord Runciman might issue one.	231
765 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 509	Sept. 4	Transmits message for Mr. Strang from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin giving Herr Henlein's account of his interview with Herr Hitler.	231
766 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 431 Saying	Sept. 4	Reports interview between Military Attaché and Head of Attaché Group of German War Office: latter considered general situation slightly easier.	232

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
767	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 432 Saving	Sept. 4	Submits estimate of present position: considers that Herr Hitler has decided upon a solution of Sudeten question in next few weeks and discusses courses open to him.	233
768	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 567 Saving	Sept. 4	Reports observations of M. Léger regarding Czechoslovak crisis: latter considers that Herr von Ribbentrop is pushing for extreme action against Czechoslovakia.	234
769	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 568 Saving	Sept. 4	Reports impression, after talk with M. Léger, that French Government will refuse to take any action regarding Czechoslovakia's future treaty relations with France and Russia until present crisis is past.	235
770	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 932	Sept. 4	Transmits further report from Military Attaché regarding scope of military measures now being taken in Germany.	236
771	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	Sept. 4	Letter to Secretary of State suggesting that possible way out of a deadlock might be for H.M.G. to put forward proposal for revision of Versailles Treaty on basis of Article 19 of Covenant.	238
772	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	Sept. 4	Letter to Sir A. Cadogan commenting on Italian attitude towards crisis and regretting that Anglo-Italian Agreement cannot be ratified at once. Inquires whether there is any point Foreign Office would like made if he gets a chance of speaking to Herr Hitler at Nuremberg.	239
773	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 511	Sept. 5	Transmits message from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin for Mr. Strang that President of Council intends to issue statement, for publication in Press of September 6, that Czechoslovak Government are making new proposals which will offer genuine and immediate self-government to Sudeten Germans.	241
774	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 410	Sept. 5	Reports conversation on Czechoslovak crisis with Yugoslav Minister who stated that Prince Regent was anxious to follow lead of H.M.G. but did not see what Yugoslavia could do if cut off by Italy and Germany from Western assistance.	241
775	SIR G. WARNER Berne Tel. No. 29	Sept. 5	Reports information that Herr Hitler has decided to attack Czechoslovakia in about six weeks' time. Highly placed personage in Berlin with whom informant was in contact said only hope of peace was for Prime Minister to send a letter through intermediary to Herr Hitler.	242

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
776 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 411	Sept. 5	Reports that according to Italian Ambassador Herr Hitler had not yet decided what to do, but that if there were further delay he would present ultimatum. Considers that if President Benes continues to refuse to go far enough next demand will be for plebiscite.	242
777 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 512	Sept. 5	Transmits message from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin for Mr. Strang that Prince Max von Hohenlohe was greatly relieved by Herr Henlein's account of interview with Herr Hitler.	243
778 TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 261	Sept. 5	Message for Lord Runciman asking him for an appreciation of the situation and prospects as seen in light of Herr Henlein's interview with Herr Hitler: stresses necessity for some step before Herr Hitler makes his final speech, probably on September 12.	244
779 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 413	Sept. 5	Tenders advice that Czechoslovak Government should accept the Hitler-Henlein terms, if in any way equitable, promptly and unconditionally in order to prevent Herr Hitler going back on them.	244
780 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 513	Sept. 5	Refers to No. 738 and states considers it a hopeful sign that the German M.F.A. should have hinted that some impartial tribunal would be required as guarantee of execution of any scheme.	245
781 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 570 Saving	Sept. 5	Refers to No. 763 and reports action taken: M.F.A. stated that he would instruct French Minister in Prague to urge President Benes to make all possible concessions and to issue an agreed communiqué with Sudeten representatives. M.F.A. felt that last word would be with Lord Runciman and repeated that whatever latter's verdict might be French Government would accept it.	245
782 TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 2002	Sept. 5	Transmits account of conversation with French Ambassador regarding present state of negotiations in Prague. French Ambassador agreed that public warnings to Germany might not have a good effect, but thought that there might be a good deal to be said for a private repetition of a plain warning to Herr Hitler.	246
783 VISCOUNT RUNCIMAN Prague	Sept. 5	Letter to Secretary of State informing him that President Benes is now doing his best to make up for lost time: states that President Benes was greatly shaken when he was told that if British people had to choose between Henlein's eight Karlsbad points and war, there would be no doubt as to the decision.	248

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
784 To SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 347	Sept. 6	Instructs Sir N. Henderson not to ask specially for interview with Herr Hitler at Nuremberg, but transmits material for use in conversation with him should an opportunity arise.	249
785 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel.No. 416	Sept. 6	Submits that H.M.G. and French Government should give immediate advice to President Benes to accept what latter describes as Herr Hitler's 'ultimatum'.	250
786 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 515	Sept. 6	Reports that French Minister has been informed of language held to President Benes on September 3. Italian Legation has also been informed of general lines of Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin's conversation with Herr Henlein on September 4.	251
787 To SIR R. LINDSAY Washington Tel. No. 608	Sept. 6	Transmits summary of recent developments in Czechoslovak crisis for confidential information of United States Secretary of State.	252
788 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 516	Sept. 6	Transmits message from Lord Runciman that Dr. Hodza has taken over from President discussions with Herr Kundt in hope of reviving official negotiations: if Sudetens accept new basis Lord Runciman considers that way is at last clear to an agreement.	253
789 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 517	Sept. 6	Refers to No. 788 and transmits message from Lord Runciman giving summary of new proposals which President of Council believes will meet Karlsbad eight points to a very great extent.	254
790 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 572 Saving	Sept. 6	Reports that M.F.A. is strongly of opinion that every effort must be made to reach an arrangement with Herr Henlein: he has agreed to instruct French Minister in Prague to keep in touch with Mr. Newton and support him in every way.	255
791 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 573 Saving	Sept. 6	Reports reply of M. Litvinov to question put to him by French Government as to Russian action in the event of German aggression against Czechoslovakia.	255
792 To SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	Sept. 6	Letter from Secretary of State expressing the hope that President Benes' new proposals will be satisfactory and stand a chance of producing a result: states that he will bear in mind Sir N. Henderson's suggestion regarding possible invocation of Article 19 of the Covenant and that he is unlikely to make a public speech.	256
793 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	Sept. 6	Letter to Sir A. Cadogan suggesting that if Herr Hitler's speech at Nuremberg is in favour of peace, News Department might try to get the Press to give Herr Hitler as much credit as possible.	257

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
794 Mr. NEWTON Prague No. 314	Sept. 6	Transmits memorandum by Military Attaché dated September 3 respecting relative strength of Czechoslovak and German armies.	257
795 Mr. SHONE Belgrade Tel. No. 60	Sept. 7	Transmits comments regarding Yugoslav attitude towards Czechoslovak crisis and summarises despatch on subject.	260
796 Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 519	Sept. 7	Transmits message from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin for Mr. Strang stating that draft protocol containing new basis proposed by Government for resumption of official negotiations was communicated by Dr. Hodza to Herr Kundt; protocol goes a long way to meet Karlsbad points.	261
797 To Sir E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 236 Saving	Sept. 7	Instructions to inform M.F.A. that H.M.G. appreciate his statement to H.M. Chargé d'Affaires on August 31 that French Government would support any arbitral solution of Sudeten question that might be proposed by H.M.G.	261
798 To Sir E. PHIPPS Paris No. 2032	Sept. 7	Transmits account of conversation with French Ambassador during which question of another warning to German Government was discussed: defines attitude of H.M.G. and French Government towards crisis.	262
799 To Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 264	Sept. 8	Message for Lord Runciman inquiring whether negotiations have been broken off as result of an incident concerning Sudeten deputies: Secretary of State states he is prepared to make a personal appeal to Herr Hitler if negotiations are broken off.	264
800 Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 524	Sept. 8	Refers to No. 799 and transmits message from Lord Runciman stating that he does not think such an appeal necessary or desirable.	264
801 Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 525	Sept. 8	Transmits message from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin giving text of communiqué regarding breaking off of negotiations by Sudeten delegation until incidents at Mährisch-Ostrau had been liquidated: negotiations likely to be resumed on September 9 or 10.	265
802 Viscount CHILSTON Moscow Tel. No. 166	Sept. 8	Reports conversation with M. Potemkin who said that there seemed to be no question of Czech-German conflict being submitted to the League: M. Potemkin stated his opinion that there would be no war and that should there be one Soviet Union was not obliged to intervene until France was engaged.	266
803 Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 526	Sept. 8	Transmits message from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin for Mr. Strang regarding new proposals which should serve as adequate basis for resuming official negotiations.	266

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
804 To Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 265	Sept. 8	Message for Lord Runciman inquiring whether he intends, in event of break-down in negotiations, to produce proposals of his own differing from those now put forward by Czechoslovak Government.	267
805 Mr. SHONE Belgrade Tel. No. 62	Sept. 8	Reports that German Military Attaché has said frankly to Colonel Stronge that Nazi leaders cared little about Sudeten question but wanted Czechoslovakia itself for economic reasons: German Military Attaché believed Herr Hitler's policy was largely one of bluff.	268
806 To Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 266	Sept. 8	Transmits text of projected statement to the Press by Prime Minister regarding possibility of settling Sudeten question by friendly discussion and negotiations and asks for views of Mr. Newton and Lord Runciman.	268
807 Sir E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 579 Saving	Sept. 8	Reports views of President of Council on Czechoslovak crisis: gives his replies to questions regarding French action in event of war and French internal situation. M. Daladier spoke of report from French Ambassador in Berlin that a state of 'alerte' had been declared in Germany.	269
808 To Viscount CHILSTON Moscow No. 548	Sept. 8	Transmits account of conversation with M. Maisky regarding Czechoslovak crisis. M. Maisky stated that M. Litvinov had again suggested to French Government that Soviet Union would be willing to co-operate with France and United Kingdom in joint Note to Berlin.	271
809* Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 532	Sept. 9	Reports reasons why Lord Runciman is not in favour of issue of a statement to Press by Prime Minister.	272
810 Sir N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 421	Sept. 9	Strongly deprecates proposal to make a personal appeal to Herr Hitler.	272
811 To Sir N. HENDERSON Nuremberg Tel. Unnumbered	Sept. 9	Instructions to ask M.F.A. for an appointment for September 10 in order to deliver a message to him personally.	273
812 Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 534	Sept. 9	Transmits message from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin for Mr. Strang reporting that he has seen advice prepared by Herr Kier, Reich-German legal adviser to Sudeten German party, regarding acceptance or refusal of new proposals: conclusion is that draft can be regarded from a legal point of view as a suitable basis for realization of Karlsbad eight points.	273
813 Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 535	Sept. 9	Message from Lord Runciman stating that while proposals of Czechoslovak Government differ in some respects from those he has been preparing, the general line is the same. Lord Runciman states he might still have to produce proposals.	274



NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
814 TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 2051	Sept. 9	Transmits record of conversation with French Ambassador during which M. Corbin urged very strongly upon H.M.G. that, in event of all efforts at conciliation failing at Prague, Lord Runciman should be ready to formulate his own proposals and conclusions. Ambassador stated that French Government believed that Herr Hitler had decided to attack Czechoslovakia, counting upon what he judged to be uncertainty of British policy and hampering effect that this was exercising on France. Position of H.M.G. clearly defined to M. Corbin by Secretary of State.	275
815 TO MR. KIRKPATRICK Berlin Tel. No. 354	Sept. 9	Transmits message for H.M. Ambassador at Nuremberg instructing him to read it to M.F.A. and to request that it be delivered to Herr Hitler without delay; message contains warning that in event of Czechoslovakia being attacked and France coming to her assistance result must be a general conflict from which Great Britain could not stand aside.	277
816 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 580 Saving	Sept. 9	Reports observations of M. Blum regarding crisis. M. Blum said that if H.M.G. made it clear that German aggression would inevitably bring in Great Britain, Herr Hitler would never dare to attack Czechoslovakia.	278
817 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 468 Saving	Sept. 9	Reports joint meeting, on September 8, of political directorate of Sudeten German party and representatives of Slovak People's Party, United Hungarian Parties and Polish Committee of Understanding; communiqué issued after meeting stated that agreement had been reached on fundamental question of reconstruction of State and solution of nationalities problem.	279
818 SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 424	Sept. 10	Reports that Chancellor's speech on September 9 reflects his determination not to appear before the world as capitulating to threats: suggests that if it should be decided to issue warning, <i>démarche</i> should be kept secret.	279
819 SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 426	Sept. 10	Message for Sir A. Cadogan transmitting extracts from letter from Sir N. Henderson giving appreciation of situation and urging that most fatal thing now would be repetition or appearance of repetition of May 21 threat.	280

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
820	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 539	Sept. 10	Reports that Czechoslovak General Staff are becoming anxious regarding their own lack of any precautionary measures in view of preparedness of German Army: if Herr Hitler's speech should indicate increased danger it was likely that Czechs would mobilize at once: transmits comments of Military Attaché.	280
821	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 427	Sept. 10	Transmits report of Military Attaché on his tour including Munich, Vienna, Prague, and Dresden.	281
822	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 236	Sept. 10	Reports that he has handed to M.F.A. a copy of No. 798 and proposes to let him have a copy of No. 814: asks whether he may give M. Bonnet a copy of F.O. telegram No. 141 of May 22 defining attitude of H.M.G. in the event of an attack by Germany on Czechoslovakia.	282
823	SIR N. HENDERSON Nuremberg Tel. Unnumbered	Sept. 10	Asks how it will be possible to convince Herr Hitler that in certain circumstances Great Britain could not stand aside, without giving warning likely to have opposite effect to that intended.	283
824	TO SIR R. LINDSAY Washington Tel. No. 619	Sept. 10	Reports conversation with U.S. Ambassador who was told of instructions sent to Sir N. Henderson regarding warning to Herr Hitler of likely consequences of aggressive action: discussion of probable course of public feeling in Great Britain and U.S.A. in the event of an attack on Czechoslovakia.	284
825	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Nuremberg Tel. Unnumbered	Sept. 10	States that in view of representations made in Nos. 819 and 823 and on understanding that M.F.A. and others are under no misapprehension as to position of H.M.G. no further communication need be made.	285
826	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 428	Sept. 10	Reports information received by Military Attaché from director of a large German armament firm to the effect that latter thought it unlikely that any decision to make war had yet been taken.	285
827	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 360	Sept. 10	Transmits account of conversation between German Naval Attaché and Director of Naval Intelligence: former had called on Director to inquire as to significance of naval measures announced in Press.	286
828	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 585 Saving	Sept. 10	Refers to No. 797 and reports that M.F.A. was informed accordingly: M. Bonnet repeated that French Government would support any plan for a settlement of the Sudeten problem put forward by H.M.G. or Lord Runciman.	287
829	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 73 Saving	Sept. 10	Recapitulates views on attitude of Poland to the Czechoslovak crisis.	287

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
830 SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 431	Sept. 11	Submits appreciation of situation: states that public opinion is much alarmed at German military measures and that there is a general fear that an attack on Czechoslovakia may lead to a European war which Germany would be likely to lose.	289
831 SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 432	Sept. 11	Reports information received by Military Attaché from Head of Attaché Group regarding German military measures: latter said that no large concentrations had taken place near Czechoslovak frontier.	290
832 SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 434	Sept. 11	Reports that French Ambassador bases his report as to state of 'alerte' in Germany mainly on information received through domestic staff of one of his Consuls. Military Attaché states that there is no evidence in Berlin of a state of 'alerte'.	291
833 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 237	Sept. 11	Reports that according to information received by Secretary-General of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Herr Hitler, being convinced of British abstention, has decided to strike against Czechoslovakia, probably about September 24. M. Léger feels that if Herr Hitler's speech proves as indefinite as seems likely it will be essential to propose publicly and almost immediately a Four Power Conference between Great Britain, France, Germany, and Italy.	291
834 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 238	Sept. 11	Reports that he has informed Secretary-General of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of account of Secretary of State's conversation with French Ambassador (No. 814) and reports dismay of M. Léger at sentence in paragraph 8.	292
835 UNITED KINGDOM DELEGATION Geneva Tel. No. 26	Sept. 11	Transmits message from Mr. Butler reporting discussion of Captain Wallace, Mr. Stevenson, and himself with M. Bonnet regarding general situation in Europe, reform of Covenant, and possible repercussions of Central European situation on events in Geneva.	293
836 To SIR R. LINDSAY Washington No. 749	Sept. 11	Transmits account of visit of U.S. Ambassador who called to discuss the situation in regard to Czechoslovakia. Mr. Kennedy was informed of present position and of German Naval Attaché's call at Admiralty to inquire as to significance of measures taken in connexion with Fleet.	295
837 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 438	Sept. 12	Reports impressions gained at Nuremberg: considers that situation is very serious and that alleviation of crisis can come only from some final plan at Prague which H.M.G. can support.	296

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
838 VISCOUNT CHILSTON Moscow Tel. No. 167	Sept. 12	Reports that German Military and Naval Attachés and such of diplomatic staff as were not already on leave, with exception of Counsellor, have now left for Germany.	298
839 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 439	Sept. 12	Reports language used to various personalities at Nuremberg; submits suggestion that Prime Minister should address a personal letter to Herr Hitler, to be enclosed in one from Secretary of State to Herr von Ribbentrop, making clear British attitude if France compelled to go to war.	298
840 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 440	Sept. 12	Transmits observations of leading personalities at Nuremberg regarding crisis.	300
841 SIR R. LINDSAY Washington Tel. No. 342	Sept. 12	Transmits views on American feeling regarding Czechoslovak crisis and possibility of war—agrees with diagnosis of U.S. Ambassador as given in No. 824.	301
842 TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 240 Saving	Sept. 12	Expresses surprise at effect on M. Léger of his interview with French Ambassador on September 9; asks Sir E. Phipps to explain matters to M. Léger or M.F.A.	301
843 TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris	Sept. 12	Letter from Secretary of State replying to private letter from Sir E. Phipps of September 10 regarding a question put to him by M. Bonnet as to action which H.M.G. would take if Czechoslovakia were attacked and France involved.	303
844 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 555	Sept. 13	Reports that situation at Eger and Karlsbad has become serious.	304
845 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 554	Sept. 13	Message from Lord Runciman regarding measures to be taken by President of Council to preserve public order.	304
846 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 557	Sept. 13	Reports proclamation of martial law in two or three districts. Herr Kundt assured Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin before he left Prague that he would do his utmost to preserve order.	305
847 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 241	Sept. 13	Reports that he is seeing MM. Bonnet and Léger in afternoon after Ministerial Council; M. Léger has inquired whether Secretary of State's views on advisability of Four Power Conference yet received. Considers public opinion is becoming more and more ready, in order to avoid war, to accept even solution of a plebiscite for autonomy outside the Reich.	305
848 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 242	Sept. 13	Reports that M. Bonnet has just telephoned to beg that, in view of grave incidents in Czechoslovakia, Lord Runciman should issue a declaration stating that he is about to propose a plan: M.F.A. feels that question of peace or war may be a matter of minutes.	305

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
849 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 441	Sept. 13	Considers that only immediate action by Czechoslovak Government can arrest recourse to force by Germany and recommends that strongest pressure be put by H.M.G. and French Government on President Benes to make immediate concessions: if French Government will not agree, suggests that H.M.G. should act alone, making it clear that if Czechs will not accept Lord Runciman's last word, H.M.G. decline to be responsible for consequences.	306
850 To MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 283	Sept. 13	Message for Lord Runciman asking him for his views regarding the production of his own plan at the present moment.	308
851 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 558	Sept. 13	Reports information received by Military Attaché from General Staff to effect that every effort will be made to restrict the use of force to minimum required for preservation of order in Sudeten districts.	308
852 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 243	Sept. 13	Reports that M.F.A. suggests that Lord Runciman should now bring the two parties together in his presence and assist at their future negotiations: thinks that M. Bonnet has lost his nerve.	309
853 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 443	Sept. 13	Transmits Military Attaché's opinion of views of various Attachés and German officers prior to Herr Hitler's speech of September 12.	309
854 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 444	Sept. 13	Reports that he hopes to see M.F.A. or State Secretary on September 14: considers in a very short time Herr Hitler may not even accept a plebiscite: suggests acceptance of Karlsbad points with some reservation regarding Nazi philosophy.	310
855 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 244	Sept. 13	Reports interview with M. Bonnet who said peace must be preserved at any price as neither France nor Great Britain ready for war.	310
856 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 245	Sept. 13	Reports that M. Bonnet repeated proposal regarding a Four Power Conference and said he would be glad to have Secretary of State's views.	311
857 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 246	Sept. 13	Reports interview with M. Daladier who stated that he was gravely perturbed by bloodshed in Czechoslovakia and felt every minute was now precious: he repeated, in reply to a question, but with lack of enthusiasm, that if Germans used force France would be obliged to do so.	311
858 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 247	Sept. 13	States that M. Daladier is in favour of a Three Power Conference of Germany, France, and Great Britain over Czechoslovakia if Herr Hitler agrees.	312

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
859 Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 564	Sept. 13	Transmits message from Lord Runciman stating that publication of his plan would be of no use in present circumstances: immediate problem is one of law and order: plan might be produced later.	312
860 Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 566	Sept. 13	Reports that President of Council has been in telephonic communication regarding present situation in Sudeten areas with Herr Frank who has given an assurance that peace and order will be restored immediately subject to certain conditions: Dr. Hodza ready to agree, subject to condition that Sudeten leaders come to Prague to discuss maintenance of public order.	313
861 Sir E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 248	Sept. 13	Transmits message for Prime Minister from M. Daladier suggesting that in order to prevent entry of German troops into Czechoslovakia, Lord Runciman should make known his plan, and that, if necessary, a Three Power Conference should be proposed.	313
862 To Sir N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 368	Sept. 13	Instructions to ensure through Herr von Ribbentrop the immediate delivery of a message from the Prime Minister to Herr Hitler suggesting that he should come to see him with a view to finding a peaceful solution to the present crisis and asking Herr Hitler to fix time and place of meeting.	314

#### CHAPTER IX

Mr. Chamberlain's meeting with Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden: Anglo-French conversations of September 18: Anglo-French approach to Czechoslovak Government: acceptance by Czechoslovak Government of Anglo-French proposals. (September 13-21, 1938.)

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
863 Sir N. CHARLES Rome Tel. No. 571	Sept. 13	Reports that view in responsible Rome circles regarding Czechoslovak crisis is that Sudetens should be given possibility of separating themselves from Prague.	315
864 Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 567	Sept. 13	Reports that according to official information there have been eleven deaths in the course of recent demonstrations. M.F.A. stated that attacks on public buildings and demonstrations were reasons why martial law had been proclaimed.	316
865 To Sir H. KENNARD Warsaw No. 416	Sept. 13	Transmits account of conversation with Polish Ambassador during which attitude of H.M.G. towards Czechoslovak crisis was explained to him. Reports reply of Ambassador to question as to attitude of Poland in event of war.	317

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
866 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 271	Sept. 14	Message for President of Council informing him that Prime Minister considers M. Daladier's proposed course of action may be useful but before deciding Prime Minister is exploring another possibility of direct action in Berlin.	318
867 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 568	Sept. 14	Transmits account received from M.F.A. of latest developments: possibility that Czechoslovak Government might have to take measures similar to those of May 21.	319
868 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 570	Sept. 14	Reports information received by Air Attaché that Air Force is at its war stations.	320
869 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 571	Sept. 14	Transmits text of message received by President of Council from Herr Henlein stating that conditions for a continuation of the negotiations no longer exist.	320
870 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 569	Sept. 14	Reports that French Minister, on instructions from his Government, has strongly urged Dr. Hodza to accept Sudeten demands unconditionally: President of Council now consulting President Benes regarding matter.	321
871 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 572	Sept. 14	Reports that Herr Frank has stated to Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin that the four points regarding withdrawal of military law, &c., should not only be accepted by Czechoslovak Government but also carried out before any representative of Sudeten German party would come to Prague for discussions: if this demand were accepted Herr Frank thought Sudeten German party would be prepared to recommend negotiations.	321
872 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 249	Sept. 14	Reports that there is little doubt that in order to avoid war French public opinion would accept with relief grant of autonomy to Sudeten Germans outside the Reich if imposed on M. Benes by H.M.G. and French Government.	322
873 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 448	Sept. 14	Reports conversation with Field-Marshal Göring regarding proposed visit of Prime Minister to Herr Hitler.	322
874 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 250	Sept. 14	Reports that M.F.A. states that France will accept any solution of Czechoslovak question to avoid war. In view of possible Czechoslovak mobilization without consulting French Government, M. Bonnet has given President Benes a broad hint that France may have to reconsider her treaty obligations towards the Czechoslovaks.	323
875 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 272	Sept. 14	Instructions to inform French Government of plan of Prime Minister to visit Herr Hitler.	323

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
876 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 277	Sept. 14	States reply has now been received from Herr Hitler who hopes meeting may be arranged for midday September 15. Prime Minister leaving by air morning of September 15.	325
877 To MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 285	Sept. 14	Repeats No. 876 for information of Mr. Newton and Lord Runciman only.	325
878 F.O. MINUTE	Sept. 14	Records telephone message from Sir N. Henderson regarding his interview with Herr von Weizsäcker to whom he handed Prime Minister's message for Herr Hitler.	325
879 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 274 and No. 275	Sept. 14	Refers to discrepancy between French Ambassador's record of conversations with Secretary of State on September 7 and 9 and Secretary of State's record, and asks Sir E. Phipps to inform M. Bonnet that Secretary of State's record represents view of H.M.G.	326
880 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 582	Sept. 14	Reports extract from communiqué issued by Sudeten German party from Eger to effect that a real and immediate realization of party's demands might still make negotiations possible. Karlsbad points would not, however, suffice but account would have to be taken of Sudeten German right to self-determination.	327
881 To SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 370	Sept. 14	Refers to No. 849 and corrects possible misunderstanding by Sir N. Henderson regarding position of H.M.G. should Germany take direct action against Czechoslovakia.	327
882 To MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 286	Sept. 14	Message for Lord Runciman from the Prime Minister informing him that he is going to Berchtesgaden on September 15, and expects to hold conversations with Herr Hitler on September 16 and possibly 17; hopes Lord Runciman will be able to join him at short notice should he be asked to do so.	328
883 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 252	Sept. 14	Reports that M. Daladier did not look very pleased when told of Prime Minister's projected visit to Herr Hitler: M. Daladier hoped that the interview would produce good results but that his own proposal had been for a conversation 'à trois'.	329
884 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 583	Sept. 14	Summarizes remarks made by President Benes on intentions of the Reich: feared that German leaders did not desire peaceful settlement of Sudeten question.	329



NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
885 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 437 Saving	Sept. 14	Reports information from Field-Marshal Göring that if Germany took action against Czechoslovakia she would not move against France by land or air. Sir N. Henderson considers that Germany will remain strictly on the defensive in the West so as to enable Government to represent to nation that they are not the aggressors.	330
886 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 449	Sept. 15	Reports conversation with former German Ambassador in Rome: states that he asked Herr von Hassell to tell General Keitel, whom he was seeing later on in the day, that if France were compelled to come to the aid of Czechoslovakia, it would be impossible for Great Britain to stand aloof.	330
887 SIR N. CHARLES Rome Tel. No. 574	Sept. 15	Reports conversation with Italian M.F.A. regarding crisis: Count Ciano stated that Herr Hitler meant to convey by his speech of September 12 that there should be a plebiscite to decide the fate of the Sudetens. Count Ciano stated that Italy was strongly opposed to war and was doing her best to exercise a moderating influence.	331
888 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 584	Sept. 15	Submits account received from President Benes regarding Sudeten question. President stated that his last proposals conceded substance of Karlsbad programme although he feared they would threaten the democratic structure of the State: a plebiscite would mean disintegration of the State and civil war. President spoke of putting into effect such of his proposals as could be realized without further discussion.	332
889 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 587	Sept. 15	Message from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin for Mr. Strang stating that Herr Henlein, before leaving for Germany to see Herr Hitler, said (i) he hoped to continue to keep in contact with Mission and would instruct Herr Kundt to keep in close touch, (ii) if negotiations with Czechoslovak Government were resumed they must be on basis of a plebiscite.	333
890 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 450	Sept. 15	Reports that news of Prime Minister's visit was greeted by the public with relief and satisfaction: latest reports of riots in Sudetenland have convinced the public that it is out of the question for Sudetens to continue to form part of Czechoslovak State, and it is assumed that Mr. Chamberlain will accept this view.	334
891 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 591	Sept. 15	Transmits text of communiqué said to have been published by Sudeten German party at Asch proclaiming right of Sudeten people to defend themselves: general strike has been declared at Liberec and German wireless broadcast a proclamation by Herr Henlein stating wish of Sudeten Germans to join Reich.	334

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
892 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 595	Sept. 15	Summarizes official communiqué of September 14 giving the Czechoslovak Government's version of the reasons for the breaking off of negotiations.	335
893 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 594	Sept. 15	Reports considerable agitation amongst army officers in favour of overthrowing the Government and setting up a military régime.	336
894 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 596 Saving	Sept. 15	Transmits thanks of M.F.A. and French Government for gesture of Prime Minister in going to Berchtesgaden.	336
895 MR. CHAMBERLAIN	Sept. 15	Notes of conversation with Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden on September 15.	338
896 HERR SCHMIDT (German Translator)	Sept. 15	Translation of notes made by Herr Schmidt of Mr. Chamberlain's conversation with Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden.	342
897 SIR H. WILSON	Sept. 16	Notes on conversations during Mr. Chamberlain's visit to Berchtesgaden.	351
898 U.K. DELEGATION Geneva Tel. No. 32	Sept. 15	Transmits record of conversation of Lord de la Warr with Roumanian M.F.A. regarding Roumania's attitude in event of an attack on Czechoslovakia.	354
899 SIR N. CHARLES Rome Tel. No. 581	Sept. 16	Reports conversation between Military Attaché and German Assistant Military Attaché: latter expressed his relief and that of staff of German Embassy at news of visit of Mr. Chamberlain to Berchtesgaden.	356
900 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 602	Sept. 16	Reports that Czech casualties and stories of murders of gendarmes may produce serious effects on Czech population. Reports views of French Military Attaché as to reactions of army in case of invasion by Germany or proposals for plebiscite or cession of Sudeten areas.	356
901 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 455	Sept. 16	Reports information received from U.S. Embassy that Czechoslovak Consular Officers in Vienna and Stuttgart have requested their U.S. colleagues to protect their interests.	357
902 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 605	Sept. 16	Reports that hint has reached him that if some territorial secession absolutely insisted upon by Herr Hitler it might be feasible to surrender Egerland and certain other areas: rest of Sudeten Germans in areas which could not be amputated could be granted self-determination within the present State by means of Government's last offer.	358

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
903 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 459	Sept. 16	Considers that agreement of H.M.G. and French Government and of Lord Runciman to secession of Sudetens in principle should be obtained and made known, and that French Government should notify Czechoslovak Government that they cannot count on French support if they decide to go to war rather than accept such a solution.	358
904 FRENCH AMBASSADOR London	Sept. 16	Note to Secretary of State expressing satisfaction of French Government and people regarding Mr. Chamberlain's visit to Herr Hitler, and promises full support of French Government.	359
905 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 463	Sept. 17	Reports effect on public opinion of propaganda against the Czechs: H.M. Consul at Dresden reports considerable anti-Czech feeling in frontier districts.	360
906 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 460	Sept. 17	Refers to No. 902 and submits view that incorporation of Sudeten areas in the Reich is the only solution and urges acceptance in principle be recognized by H.M.G. and French Government.	360
907 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 254	Sept. 17	Reports anxiety of French Government to be informed of what occurred at Berchtesgaden and M. Daladier's wish that he and M. Bonnet should be invited to London for information and consultation.	361
908 TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 280	Sept. 17	Invites President of Council and M.F.A. to come to London immediately for discussion.	362
909 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 255	Sept. 17	Reports that invitation has been telephoned to M. Bonnet who will reply for himself and M. Daladier as soon as possible.	362
910 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 464	Sept. 17	Reports conversation with Field-Marshal Göring: Field-Marshal stated that self-determination for the Sudetens was the only possible solution of problem. Field-Marshal said that Herr Hitler's word could be relied on, and that unless something catastrophic happened there would be no action by Germany until the next meeting took place.	362
911 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 466	Sept. 17	Reports that Field-Marshal Göring spoke in admiring and respectful manner of Prime Minister.	364
912 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 470	Sept. 17	Reports that Field-Marshal Göring stated that Germany was prepared to shelve political aspect of Czechoslovak problem until after settlement of racial question.	364
913 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 621	Sept. 17	Reports that in conversation with Military Attaché official of the General Staff said that he thought there could be no great objection to cession of Egerland and one or two small districts.	364

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
914 U.K. DELEGATION Geneva Tel. No. 37	Sept. 17	Transmits substance of notes taken from a document written by M. Massigli regarding the attitude France would adopt in the event of a German attack on Czechoslovakia: explains why it would be advantageous to France to receive from the Council a finding that aggression had occurred.	365
915 U.K. DELEGATION Geneva Tel. No. 38	Sept. 17	Transmits comments on No. 914.	366
916 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 623	Sept. 17	Reports that German wireless bulletins describing the situation in Sudeten areas are false and suggests protests to German Government.	366
917 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 471	Sept. 17	Submits comments on situation after conversation with Field-Marshal Göring.	367
918 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 624	Sept. 18	Reports information given to Military Attaché by General Staff that in view of increasing numbers of reservists being called to the colours daily in Germany it may be necessary for Czechoslovak Government to call up three or four classes in Czechoslovakia.	368
919 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 627	Sept. 18	Reports that M.F.A. believes that Herr Hitler wants to recreate the Holy Roman Empire.	368
920 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 628	Sept. 18	Reports that, according to Czechoslovak Government, Germany was planning an attack on Czechoslovakia immediately after September 20 and probably on September 23: in the circumstances Czechoslovak Government felt they must mobilize, but first desired to receive view of French and British Governments.	369
921 MR. JEBB	Sept. 18	Note of a telephone message from the Czechoslovak Minister reporting (i) an announcement that M. Hodza is proposing to broadcast; (ii) that German Government intended to arrest Czechoslovak citizens in Germany to the number of Sudetens arrested in Czechoslovakia; and (iii) that German Government would take reprisals in the event of the death penalty being carried out on Sudetens in Czechoslovakia.	369
922 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 629	Sept. 18	Reports information received by Military Attaché from Chief of General Staff regarding question of mobilization: no decision to mobilize had been taken, and only action so far had been to send telegrams to London and Paris asking for advice.	370

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
923 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 474	Sept. 18	Reports peak of military preparations likely to be reached in about a week's time: considers Herr Hitler only holding back in expectation that principle of self-determination for Sudetens will be accepted at once without qualification by Western Powers.	370
924 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 630	Sept. 18	Reports information received from M.F.A. regarding warning given to Czechoslovak Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin by German State Secretary in connexion with a report that a large number of Czechoslovak reservists had been called up. Chargé d'Affaires replied that only a small number had been called up.	371
925 TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 378	Sept. 18	Instructions to let Herr Hitler know through M.F.A. and others that he should disregard anything appearing in the Press regarding meeting of British and French Ministers other than official communiqué.	372
926 TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 382	Sept. 18	Instructions to inform German Government that, relying on assurance given to Prime Minister by Chancellor, H.M.G. are advising Czechoslovak Government to abstain from mobilization measures pending further negotiations.	372
927 TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 297	Sept. 18	Instructions to inform Czechoslovak Government that H.M.G., while recognizing that decision to mobilize is one for Czechoslovak Government, would urge Czechoslovak Government to abstain from mobilization.	373
928 MEETING OF BRITISH AND FRENCH MINISTERS London	Sept. 18	Record of Anglo-French Conversations held at No. 10 Downing Street on September 18.	373
929 CZECHOSLOVAK MINISTER London	Sept. 18	Letter to Secretary of State stating that the Czechoslovak Government takes it for granted that no decision will be taken without their being previously consulted: they could take no responsibility for decisions made without them.	400
930 MR. MALLET	Sept. 18	Note of telephone message received from H.M. Embassy in Berlin stating that they have been informed by State Secretary that no record of the conversation between the Prime Minister and Herr Hitler will be communicated to H.M.G.	400
931 TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 383	Sept. 18	Instructions to see State Secretary at once and protest against decision not to supply Prime Minister with a record of his conversation with Herr Hitler.	401
932 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 635	Sept. 18	Reports that the Czechoslovak Government decided on September 17 to take extraordinary measures applicable to the whole State for a period of three months.	401

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
933	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 478	Sept. 18	Refers to No. 926 and reports that State Secretary has been informed accordingly.	402
934	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 637	Sept. 18	Transmits text of points made by President of Council in broadcast on morning of September 18 regarding crisis and action of Czechoslovak Government.	402
935	To MR. NEWTON Prague • Tel. No. 299	Sept. 19	Instructions to take no action on immediately following telegram pending further instructions.	403
936	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 640	Sept. 19	Reports conversation between Herr Kundt and Mr. Stopford on position and attitude of Sudeten German Party.	404
937	To MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 300	Sept. 19	Transmits message to be handed to President Benes containing conclusions arrived at by representatives of British and French Governments after consultation in London: recommends that Sudeten areas be transferred to the Reich. Instructions to concert with French colleague and arrange joint audience with President in order to present to him the joint message.	404
938	To MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 302	Sept. 19	Emphasizes urgent need for a reply from President Benes as Prime Minister's visit to Herr Hitler cannot be postponed beyond September 21.	406
939	To SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 386	Sept. 19	Transmits message from Prime Minister for Herr Hitler asking whether September 21 will suit Herr Hitler to resume conversations.	406
940	• MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 641	Sept. 19	Comments on terms of guarantee mentioned in No. 937, and asks whether in presenting message necessary reservations should not be made in respect of other nationalities.	406
941	To MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 301	Sept. 19	Transmits information with regard to Prime Minister's discussions with Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden. Prime Minister was satisfied that Herr Hitler would not accept any solution falling short of the incorporation of the Sudeten Germans in the Reich.	407
942	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 483 •	Sept. 19	Reports that public opinion seems now convinced that Great Britain and France will agree to plebiscite but that Czechs will resist: in these circumstances fear and dislike of war have almost disappeared.	407
943	• SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 479	Sept. 19	Transmits observations of Military Attaché on his return from manoeuvres in East Prussia.	408
944	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 261	Sept. 19	Transmits text of communiqué issued after Ministerial Council regarding the negotiations in London and stating agreement had been reached with British Government.	409

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
945 MR. STRANG	Sept. 19	Note of telephone message to Sir N. Henderson regarding reply of Czechoslovak Government and stating that Prime Minister expects to be able to suggest later in the day a time for his meeting with German Chancellor.	409
946 To MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 303	Sept. 19	Refers to No. 940 and gives correct interpretation of guarantee offered with instructions to communicate it to President Benes in conjunction with French Minister.	409
947 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 293	Sept. 19	Refers to No. 946 and asks Sir E. Phipps to urge M. Bonnet to send necessary instructions to French Minister in Prague without delay.	410
948 To MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 305	Sept. 19	Transmits explanation of word 'must' in paragraph 8 of No. 937.	410
949 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 486	Sept. 19	Reports that he telephoned to Field-Marshal Göring to acquaint him personally with proposal for renewal of conversations between Prime Minister and Herr Hitler and to protest at withholding of record of conversation at Berchtesgaden. Field-Marshal said that record would be communicated.	410
950 MR. STRANG	Sept. 19	Note of message telephoned to Sir N. Henderson regarding visit of Prime Minister to Godesberg.	411
951 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 643	Sept. 19	Reports that French colleague was only able this morning to communicate reply of French Government to Czechoslovak inquiry regarding mobilization: Mr. Newton states that he informed M.F.A. that H.M.G. associated themselves with the advice given by the French Government.	411
952 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 644	Sept. 19	Reports visit of Military Attaché to General Staff where he was informed of conditions of settlement which had been received from London. Colonel Stronge was told that in view of the fact that Czechoslovakia was being betrayed by France and abandoned by Britain it would be suicidal to fight Germany single-handed: for that reason it was not proposed to resist.	411
953 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 649	Sept. 19	Refers to No. 946 and deprecates further communication to Czechoslovak Government at the moment: if asked for clarification of guarantee Mr. Newton will explain it on the lines of the telegram under reference.	412
954 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 262	Sept. 19	Refers to No. 947 and states that M.F.A. has promised to instruct French Minister at Prague accordingly.	412

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
955 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 263	Sept. 19	Refers to No. 954 and reports that M. Bonnet would prefer that communication regarding guarantee should be made by British Minister alone as French Government think it inopportune to raise the question at the present stage.	413
956 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 646	Sept. 19	Refers to No. 937 and reports that joint communication was made at 2 p.m. on September 19.	413
957 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 487	Sept. 19	Reports conversation with Baron von Neurath who thought it probable that President Benes would resign rather than accept self-determination.	413
958 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 488	Sept. 19	Urges immediate notification to German Government regarding visit of Prime Minister.	414
959 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 648	Sept. 19	Expresses fear that once Nazi extremists realize how reluctant France and Great Britain are to defend Czechoslovakia they may make some excuse to seize the whole country. Transmits terms of a new proclamation issued by Herr Henlein urging the Sudetens to continue resistance to Czech brutality; suggests drawing attention of German Government to their responsibilities in this respect.	414
960 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 651	Sept. 19	Reports information received from Yugoslav colleague that Czechoslovak Government have instructed their Minister in Paris to ask French Government whether they will or will not hold to their engagements if Czechoslovakia is attacked by Germany: reply will decide attitude of Czechoslovak Government.	415
961 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 650	Sept. 19	Refers to No. 937 and reports that message was delivered in writing in French and English to President Benes by himself and French Minister: describes President's reactions; considers that he is more likely to accept than refuse terms.	416
962 TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 392	Sept. 19	States that it is essential for Prime Minister to have Czechoslovak reply before next meeting with Chancellor, and that it would be most unreasonable if German Government were to make any delay, which may be unavoidable, the excuse for precipitate action.	417
963 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 490	Sept. 20	Reports action on No. 962. State Secretary seemed perturbed and said that Berchtesgaden had asked whether hour of Prime Minister's arrival on September 21 could be notified to German Government before noon to-day.	417



NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
964 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 652	Sept. 20	Reports that Czechoslovak Government's reply to joint message may be expected early in the afternoon. Understands formal protest likely to be made to British and French Governments; proposes to reply to any such protest by strongly advising acceptance of proposals.	418
965 MR. SPEAIGHT	Sept. 20	Note of telephone message for Mr. Strang from Sir N. Henderson repeating his warning about risk of postponing a final decision about the Godesberg meeting.	419
966 TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 307	Sept. 20	Refers to No. 964 and approves advice which Mr. Newton proposed to give.	419
967 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 265	Sept. 20	Reports that M.F.A. has heard from the Czechoslovak Minister that his Government had not yet decided whether (i) to appeal to arbitration or (ii) to accept basis of Franco-British plan. M. Bonnet has instructed French Minister in Prague to say that (ii) is only possible course and asks that Mr. Newton may be instructed likewise.	419
968 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 654	Sept. 20	Reports that he associated himself with French colleague in representations to Czechoslovak Government and drew attention to the dangers of bargaining: reply of Czechoslovak Government being drafted and should be ready soon.	420
969 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 266	Sept. 20	Reports statement by M.F.A. that there was complete unanimity in French Cabinet in approving Anglo-French Note to Czechoslovak Government. M. Bonnet pleased with tone of French Press.	420
970 TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 395	Sept. 20	States Czechoslovak Government's reply to be handed to Mr. Newton almost at once: unlikely that Prime Minister can arrive before late on September 21.	421
971 SIR A. CADOGAN	Sept. 20	Note of telephone message from Sir N. Henderson asking whether meeting between Prime Minister and Herr Hitler could be postponed until morning of September 22.	421
972 MR. STRANG	Sept. 20	Note of message telephoned to Sir N. Henderson and reply regarding arrival of Prime Minister in Germany at 12.30 p.m. on September 22: communiqué to be issued in Germany announcing resumption of conversations at 3 p.m. on September 22.	421

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
973 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 267	Sept. 20	Reports that in reply to question M. Bonnet said that left elements in Paris might be trying to induce President Benes to reject proposals and he had heard from Prague that President's reply was likely to be evasive. In response to suggestion that President Benes should be warned of consequences of refusal to accept proposals, M. Bonnet asked that views of H.M.G. should be sought by telegraph.	422
974 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 661	Sept. 20	Reports that, according to an informant, reply now due from Czechoslovak Government will contain proposal for arbitration in accordance with Treaty of Arbitration between Czechoslovakia and Germany: states, however, that informant believes the Czechoslovak Government will give way if pressed sufficiently hard by French and British Governments.	422
975 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 268	Sept. 20	Refers to No. 973 and reports that M.F.A. now urges most insistently that if reply is as foreshadowed a joint communication should be made to President Benes in the sense suggested.	423
976 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 497	Sept. 20	Reports that, according to French Ambassador, the Polish Ambassador had an interview with Herr Hitler and that probably Regent of Hungary met Field-Marshal Göring. Considers that situation cannot hold much longer, but thinks that Herr Hitler will wait until after meeting with Prime Minister.	423
977 * TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 397	Sept. 20	Instructions to transmit personal message from Prime Minister to Chancellor asking him to suspend further concentrations of troops on Czechoslovak frontier pending resumption of conversations.	424
978 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 664	Sept. 20	Transmits chief points of Czechoslovak Government's reply to Anglo-French proposals.	424
979 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 668	Sept. 20	Reports that he has reason to believe that formal reply received from M.F.A. should not be regarded as final: suggests that he should deliver ultimatum to President Benes on September 21.	425
980 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 489	Sept. 20	Reports his view that Herr Hitler seeks only the incorporation of Sudeten areas into Germany: recommends that Herr Hitler be taken at his word.	425
981 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 667	Sept. 20	Refers to No. 974 and reports that reply has been received from M.F.A.: Dr. Krofta explained that it was impossible for Czechoslovak Government to accept the Anglo-French proposals and therefore proposed arbitration: M.F.A. warned of result of refusal to accept plan.	426

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
982 M. CORBIN London	Sept. 20	Letter to Sir A. Cadogan regarding rapid German mobilization on Czechoslovak frontier and suggesting that the Prime Minister might draw Herr Hitler's attention to effect of these military movements on work of conciliation.	427
983 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 445 Saving	Sept. 20	Reports action taken to obtain record of conversation between Prime Minister and Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden on September 15.	428
984 SIR H. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 466 Saving	Sept. 20	Reports conversation with Czechoslovak Chargé d'Affaires who stated that his Minister was postponing indefinitely his return to Berlin and that German Minister had also unofficially left Prague: M. Schubert stated that the Czechoslovak Government had not accepted the Franco-British plan and would go to war rather than do so.	428
985 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 979	Sept. 20	Transmits letters exchanged with Herr von Ribbentrop regarding the record of conversation of Prime Minister and Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden.	430
986 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 666	Sept. 20	Refers to No. 978 and transmits translation of text of Czechoslovak Government's reply to Anglo-French proposals for settlement of Sudeten question.	431
987 CZECHOSLOVAK GOVERNMENT Prague	Sept. 20	French text of No. 986.	434
988 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 269	Sept. 21	Reports that M.F.A. has instructed French Minister at Prague to make immediate representations to President Benes as to necessity for acceptance of Anglo-French proposals.	436
989 TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 296	Sept. 21	Refers to No. 991 and sends instructions to urge French Government to instruct French Minister at Prague to join in these representations.	436
990 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 498	Sept. 21	Submits appreciation of present position and states opinion that message from Prime Minister to Herr Hitler (No. 977) would cause latter resentment: is therefore availing himself of discretion not to transmit it.	436
991 TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 315	Sept. 21	Instructions to join at once with French colleague in pointing out to Czechoslovak Government that their reply in no way meets critical situation which Anglo-French proposals were designed to avert, and to urge them to withdraw it: Czechoslovak Government should be warned that, if Anglo-French proposals not accepted, British and French Governments can take no responsibility for consequences.	437

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
992 Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 669	Sept. 21	Reports that instructions in No. 991 have been carried out: President Benes promised that reply of Czechoslovak Government would be sent by midday: impression was that it would express acceptance.	438
993 Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 670	Sept. 21	Reports telephone message received from President of Council's private secretary that Czechoslovak Government have accepted Anglo-French proposals and that official reply will be sent as soon as possible.	438
994 Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 671	Sept. 21	Suggests that, if final reply of Czechoslovak Government is favourable, something should be done to express appreciation of moral courage and wisdom of Czechoslovak Government and people: perhaps United States Government might be persuaded to take similar action.	439
995 Sir N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 502	Sept. 21	Suggests that in view of danger of frontier incidents Czechoslovak Government should now withdraw their military garrison and State police from all predominantly Sudeten areas: German Government could then be approached to withdraw their concentrations from neighbourhood of Czechoslovak frontier.	439
996 Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 672	Sept. 21	Reports that difficulties with leaders of political parties have delayed Czechoslovak Government's reply and suggests that Secretary of State request Czechoslovak Minister in London to telephone to Prague. States that he proposes, in company with French Minister, to leave written communication with President Benes.	440
997 Sir H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 76	Sept. 21	Reports conversation of French Ambassador with M. Beck regarding Polish minority in Czechoslovakia: French Ambassador considers that if no consideration is given to their demands Poles may seize Teschen area.	441
998 Mr. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 673	Sept. 21	Reports that, on handing to President Benes communication in sense of oral representations, President asked for further written declaration by French and British Governments that if Czechoslovakia accepted Anglo-French proposals and were none the less attacked by Germany, they would come to her assistance—in return Czechoslovakia would accept proposals without reservation: President in response to request changed his condition as far as H.M.G. were concerned to hope and desire that H.M.G. would be willing to give written declaration in return for Czechoslovakia's acceptance of proposals.	441
999 BRITISH LEGATION Prague	Sept. 21	Note to Czechoslovak Government in terms of No. 991.	442

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
1000 SIR A. CADOGAN	Sept. 21	Note of message telephoned to Czechoslovak Minister regarding necessity for immediate acceptance by Czechoslovak Government of Anglo-French proposals: Minister's reply that proposals were being accepted.	443
1001 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 270	Sept. 21	Reports that he has suggested to M.F.A. that he should speak severely to Czechoslovak Minister in Paris: M. Bonnet promised to do so and to warn Czechoslovak Government.	444
1002 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 677	Sept. 21	Transmits summary of note received from M.F.A. dated September 21 containing Czechoslovak Government's acceptance of Anglo-French proposals.	444

## CHAPTER X

Mr. Chamberlain's meetings with Herr Hitler at Godesberg: Anglo-French conversations of September 25 and 26: Mr. Chamberlain's letter of September 26 to Herr Hitler. (September 21-26, 1938.)

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
1003 To MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 318	Sept. 21	Discusses question of problem of maintaining law and order while details of transfer of Sudeten territories being worked out: asks whether ideas in paragraphs 4, 5, and 6 should be put to President Benes.	446
1004 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 679	Sept. 21	Transmits translation of Note received from M.F.A. containing Czechoslovak Government's acceptance of Anglo-French proposals.	447
1005 CZECHOSLOVAK GOVERNMENT Prague	Sept. 21	French text of No. 1004.	447
1006 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 678	Sept. 21	Transmits message from Mr. Stopford for Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin regarding discussion between Dr. Kundt and M. Caha as to future co-operation respecting questions arising out of the proposed settlement, with a view to avoiding bloodshed during transitional period.	448
1007 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 675	Sept. 21	Reports representations, in company with French Minister, to President Benes at 2 a.m. on September 21 and subsequent discussion.	449
1008 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 680	Sept. 21	Reports appeal of Herr Jaksch, leader of German Social Democratic Party, regarding fate of the 400,000 adherents of his party: suggested that some of them might be permitted to emigrate to Canada.	450

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
1009 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 272	Sept. 21	Submits, at request of M.F.A., proposed French measures in reply to increased German concentrations against Czechoslovakia. M. Bonnet would like a reply at latest by September 23.	451
1010 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 273	Sept. 21	Refers to No. 1009 and states that Minister of War begs that reply may reach Paris by September 22 midday.	452
1011 TO FRENCH AMBASSADOR London	Sept. 21	Expresses thanks for No. 904.	452
1012 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 1079	Sept. 21	Transmits report by Military Attaché containing most recent information supplied to him by French Ministry of War in regard to German mobilization.	452
1013 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 682	Sept. 22	Reports information from Political Director at Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the effect that Sudeten 'Freikorps' crossed frontier from Germany during the night and occupied Asch: no counter-measures as yet taken on Czechoslovak side.	454
1014 TO SIR N. HENDERSON Godesberg Tel. No. 1	Sept. 22	Transmits message from Military Attaché recording statement of British representative in Berlin of oil firm who said that oil firms in Berlin had received same orders as regards arrangements for supply of petrol and lubricants for September 23 as for marches into the Rhineland and Austria.	455
1015 TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 303	Sept. 22	Refers to No. 1009 and states that H.M.G. cannot offer advice but if French Government decide to take measures in question H.M.G. would see no objection.	456
1016 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 274	Sept. 22	Refers to Nos. 1009 and 1010 and reports that in view of alarming situation on Czechoslovak frontier French press for immediate answer.	456
1017 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 276	Sept. 22	Refers to No. 1018 and reports that M. Bonnet points out that if German attacks on Czechoslovakia materialize, danger of general war will be acute.	456
1018 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 275	Sept. 22	Reports information from Secretary-General of Ministry of Foreign Affairs that French Government have heard from President Benes that several points of Czechoslovak territory seem threatened by German regular and irregular forces.	456
1019 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 683	Sept. 22	Reports that during the night of September 21/22 Reich German S.A. and S.S. detachments entered Eger and virtually took command of it.	457

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
1020 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 308	Sept. 22	Transmits message to be sent urgently to M. Léger asking whether, in view of reports of incursions of Sudeten German organizations over the border into Egerland, the advice given to Czechoslovak Government not to mobilize should be withdrawn.	457
1021 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 688	Sept. 22	Reports apprehensions that German Government may declare that conditions have so gone to pieces in Czechoslovakia that it is German duty to intervene after all: urges that Prime Minister should place no reliance on reports from German sources.	458
1022 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 277	Sept. 22	Reports that M. Léger considers that advice to Czechoslovak Government not to mobilize should certainly be withdrawn and he is advising French Government in this sense: he will confirm it later if his Government agrees.	459
1023 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 278	Sept. 22	Reports that in view of information received by French General Staff, M. Léger suggests that within an hour from now unless he hears to the contrary, Czechoslovak Government should be told that Anglo-French advice not to mobilize is withdrawn.	459
1024 To SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 64  To SIR G. KNOX Budapest Tel. No. 71	Sept. 22	Instructions to inform Polish (Hungarian) Government that H.M.G. have learnt with regret that Polish (Hungarian) Government should have found it necessary to take special military measures which appear to have no other object than to intimidate Czechoslovakia, and warn them of results which may ensue.	459
1025 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 309	Sept. 22	Agrees that Czechoslovak Government should be told that H.M.G. and French Government cannot continue to take responsibility for advising them not to mobilize: H.M. Minister in Prague is being instructed to make this communication but not before 9 p.m.	460
1026 To MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 332	Sept. 22	Transmits message to be conveyed to President Benes that H.M.G. are profoundly conscious of the immense sacrifice involved for him and his Government in agreeing to the Franco-British proposals, and recognize great public spirit that prompted their acceptance.	460
1027 To MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 331	Sept. 22	Instructions to inform Czechoslovak Government, after 9 p.m., that H.M.G. have agreed with French Government that they can no longer take responsibility for advising the Czechoslovak Government not to mobilize.	461

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
1028 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 280	Sept. 22	Reports information from French War Office that 31 German divisions have now been located on Czechoslovak frontier: French Government have moved six infantry divisions and one light mechanized division up to frontier.	461
1029 TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 311	Sept. 22	Instructions to inform French Government of contents of No. 1026 in case they wish to send similar message.	461
1050 TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 312	Sept. 22	States that in view of statement issued by Prime Minister from Godesberg, telegram has been sent to Prime Minister informing him of proposed communication to Czechoslovak Government regarding withdrawal of advice not to mobilize, but saying that in view of message received from him, H.M. Minister at Prague is being instructed to suspend action: Prime Minister has been asked to instruct Mr. Newton direct if he considers that latter should nevertheless make communication.	462
1031 TO BRITISH DELEGATION Godesberg Tel. No. 8	Sept. 22	Records action taken regarding advice to Czechoslovak Government respecting mobilization and asks Prime Minister to instruct Mr. Newton direct if he thinks that latter should nevertheless make communication.	462
1032 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 281	Sept. 22	Refers to No. 1030 and reports that M. Léger has been told to instruct French Minister at Prague to suspend proposed communication to Czechoslovak Government regarding mobilization.	463
1033 NOTES OF CONVERSATION AT GODESBERG	Sept. 22	Notes of a conversation between Mr. Chamberlain and Herr Hitler at Godesberg on September 22.	463
1034* SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 1081	Sept. 22	Transmits report from Military Attaché recording conversation with General Dentz.	473
1035 BRITISH DELEGATION Godesberg Tel. No. 1	Sept. 23	Refers to No. 1031 and states considers suspension must be maintained pending further conversation. Communication has been transmitted to Herr Hitler urging him to consider alternative proposal for maintenance of law and order as his proposal is unacceptable: meanwhile assurances have been received as to German forces not crossing the border.	474
1036 TO BRITISH DELEGATION Godesberg Tel. No. 9	Sept. 23	Transmits account received from French Embassy of a conversation between President Benes and the French Minister in Prague at 8.30 a.m. on September 21, during which former drew attention to certain points regarding Franco-British proposals: President Benes anxious that his comments should be communicated to Prime Minister.	475



NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
1037 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 694	Sept. 23	Refers to No. 1003 and submits observations on question of maintenance of law and order: considers administration should not change until delimitation of frontier has been settled.	476
1038 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 315 To MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 337	Sept. 23	Transmits account of telephone conversation on evening of September 22 with Prime Minister regarding his interview with Herr Hitler. Interview unsatisfactory but Prime Minister was to meet Herr Hitler again at 11.30 on September 23.	477
1039 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 282	Sept. 23	Reports that he has informed M.F.A. of paragraph 1 of No. 1035.	478
1040 BRITISH DELEGATION Godesberg Tel. No. 2	Sept. 23	Transmits details of situation after conversation held on September 22.	478
1041 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 317	Sept. 23	States message has been received from British Delegation to say that Prime Minister has written a letter to Herr Hitler and has been informed that latter will reply in writing: meeting fixed for 11.30 has been postponed.	479
1042 SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 514	Sept. 23	Reports conversation with French Ambassador who considers war between Czechoslovakia and Germany inevitable and that Germany would march on September 24.	479
1043 To UNITED KINGDOM DELEGATION Geneva Tel. No. 54	Sept. 23	Message for Mr. Butler instructing him to ask M. Litvinov what Soviet Government intend to do in event of war.	480
1044 To BRITISH DELEGATION Godesberg Tel. No. 12	Sept. 23	States that in light of information received it is proposed to make communication to Czechoslovak Government regarding mobilization at 3 p.m.	480
1045 BRITISH DELEGATION Godesberg Tel. No. 3	Sept. 23	Message from Prime Minister stating that he has written to Herr Hitler and has been promised a reply in writing: if reply unsatisfactory Prime Minister will say that German proposals will be placed before Czechoslovak Government and that he will return to London for consultation.	481
1046 BRITISH DELEGATION Godesberg Tel. Unnumbered	Sept. 23	Refers to No. 1044 and states that reply to Prime Minister's letter is expected at any moment and that communication should be held up a little longer.	481
1047 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 284	Sept. 23	Reports that M. Daladier has sent a message through M. Léger asking whether advice given to Czechoslovak Government not to mobilize should not be cancelled.	481
1048 BRITISH DELEGATION Godesberg Tel. No. 4	Sept. 23	Transmits text of Prime Minister's letter to Herr Hitler of September 23 protesting against Herr Hitler's proposal that German troops should immediately occupy certain areas of Sudetenland.	482

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
1049 To MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 339	Sept. 23	Instructions to make communication to Czechoslovak Government cancelling previous advice given regarding mobilization.	483
1050 To BRITISH DELEGATION Godesberg Tel. No. 14	Sept. 23	Asks Prime Minister whether, if he is anticipating a breakdown in negotiations, some Cabinet action authorizing further precautionary steps should not be taken forthwith.	483
1051 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 321	Sept. 23	Instructions to obtain statement from French Government on their attitude if Germany were to invade Czechoslovakia and meet with resistance. Enquires whether French Government have been able to obtain any indication of assistance likely to be afforded by Soviet Government to Czechoslovakia. Requests observations on feeling in political circles and amongst general public.	484
1052 BRITISH DELEGATION Godesberg Tel. No. 6 to Prague (Tel. No. 6 to F.O.)	Sept. 23	Message from Prime Minister to Mr. Newton, Prague, informing him briefly of contents of Herr Hitler's reply to letter addressed to him, and instructing Mr. Newton as to action to be taken.	484
1053 BRITISH DELEGATION Godesberg Tel. No. 5	Sept. 23	Transmits translation of Herr Hitler's reply to Prime Minister's letter.	485
1054 BRITISH DELEGATION Godesberg Tel. No. 7 to Paris (Tel. No. 7 to F.O.)	Sept. 23	Transmits to Sir E. Phipps details of action being taken by Prime Minister following reply of Herr Hitler to his letter, with instructions to inform the French Government accordingly.	488
1055 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 712	Sept. 23	Refers to No. 1049 and states action taken.	488
1056 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 286	Sept. 23	Reports extent of help, according to M. Litvinov, to be afforded by Russia, should war break out between Germany and Czechoslovakia: M. Bonnet not much impressed and fears that Poland would be on the wrong side in the event of war.	489
1057 BRITISH DELEGATION Godesberg Tel. Unnumbered Saving	Sept. 24	Transmits text of letter from Prime Minister addressed to Herr Hitler taking note of his communication, requesting memorandum and maps setting out German proposals for communication to Czechoslovak Government, and informing Herr Hitler that he proposed to return to London. Mr. Chamberlain also asked for assurance that no action would be taken by the forces of the Reich to prejudice any further mediation which might be found possible.	489

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
1058 TO BRITISH DELEGATION Godesberg Tel. Unnumbered	Sept. 23	Message for Prime Minister informing him of state of public opinion and suggesting that Prime Minister should make it plain to Herr Hitler that, after great concessions made by Czechoslovak Government, for him to reject opportunity of peaceful solution would be a crime against humanity.	490
1059 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 709	Sept. 23	Reports further evidence received from President Benes of German preparations for attack: President considers situation very critical and begged that H.M.G. should be reminded of advice given to Czechoslovak Government not to mobilize.	490
1060 BRITISH DELEGATION Godesberg Tel. No. 8 to Prague (Tel. No. 9 to F.O.)	Sept. 23	Instructions to Mr. Newton to inform Czechoslovak Government that Memorandum setting out Herr Hitler's demands will be telegraphed, and maps will be sent by air on September 24: Czechoslovak Government may wish to defer decision until these particulars are available.	491
1061 TO BRITISH DELEGATION Godesberg Tel. No. 15	Sept. 23	Refers to No. 1060 and assumes 'particulars' in last sentence to refer to maps and 'decision' to refer to decision on memorandum.	491
1062 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 715	Sept. 23	Refers to Nos. 1049 and 1052 and reports that action taken immediately on receipt of telegrams: Czechoslovak Government have decided that they must mobilize forthwith.	492
1063 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 710	Sept. 23	Discusses question of an international force to control Sudeten area pending settlement.	492
1064 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 3 to Godesberg (Tel. No. 287 to F.O.)	Sept. 23	Reports to Prime Minister action taken following receipt of No. 1054: M. Bonnet seemed hopeful that an arrangement might be reached whereby German troops would occupy the Sudeten areas gradually and with consent of Czechoslovak Government: M. Bonnet considered Czechoslovak Government order to mobilize might cause Herr Hitler to attack.	493
1065 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 288	Sept. 23	Reports that he has asked M. Bonnet to give a reply, after consultation with his Government, as to French attitude if Germany were to invade Czechoslovakia and meet with resistance.	494
1066 BRITISH DELEGATION Godesberg Tel. No. 10 to Paris (Tel. No. 12 to F.O.)	Sept. 24	Instructions to Sir E. Phipps to inform French Government of action taken at Prague and communicate to them a copy of the German Memorandum.	494
1067 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 716	Sept. 24	Asks to be informed immediately on receipt of reply to No. 1061. Czechoslovak Government informed that German Memorandum and map are on their way.	494

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
1068 BRITISH DELEGATION Godesberg Tel. No. 10 to Prague (Tel. No. 11 to F.O.)	Sept. 24	Transmits text of Memorandum contain- ing Herr Hitler's demands.	495
1069 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 717	Sept. 24	Asks for repetition of text of German Memorandum immediately on receipt.	496
1070 BRITISH DELEGATION Godesberg Tel. No. 9 to Prague (Tel. No. 10 to F.O.)	Sept. 24	Instructions to Mr. Newton, Prague, to communicate translation of Memorandum contained in No. 1068 to Czechoslovak Government and to say that Herr Hitler, in reply to a question from Prime Minister, said that proposals contained therein con- stituted his last word.	497
1071 UNITED KINGDOM DELEGATION Geneva Tel. No. 42	Sept. 24	Transmits record of conversation of Mr. Butler and Lord de la Warr with M. Litvinov and M. Maisky regarding atti- tude of Soviet Government should Czecho- slovakia be attacked and France go to her assistance.	497
1072 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 718	Sept. 24	Reports that text of Memorandum has not yet arrived.	498
1073 NOTES OF CONVERSA- TION AT GODESBERG	Sept. 23- 24	Notes of a conversation between the Prime Minister and Herr Hitler at Godesberg on September 23-24.	499
1074 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 289	Sept. 24	Reports that Socialist Radical group of Chamber saw M. Daladier on September 22 and that a communiqué was subse- quently issued stating that the group had again expressed their full confidence in M. Daladier to defend interests of France: transmits statement issued to Press by M. Cot.	508
1075 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 290	Sept. 24	Reports information from General Gamelin that in President of Council's opinion only way to save peace was to demonstrate that France was prepared to fight: transmits details of latest military measures taken by France. Reports statement by M. Flandin that all peasant class against war.	509
1076 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 292	Sept. 24	Transmits his own personal impressions on French attitude.	510
1077 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 724	Sept. 24	Reports reasons for decision of Czecho- slovak Government to order mobilization by broadcast.	511
1078 TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 325	Sept. 24	States Prime Minister would be very glad to make report personally to French Ministers on Godesberg conversations and asks if they could come to London on September 25.	511

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
1079 To MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 355	Sept. 24	States that Prime Minister hopes reply of Czechoslovak Government to German Memorandum may be transmitted through him: if Czechoslovak Government were able to send representative to London he would be pleased to see him on September 26.	511
1080 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 725	Sept. 24	Reports that English translation of German Memorandum was communicated to M.F.A. at 6 p.m.: M. Krofta was told that German text and map would be delivered to him immediately it was received.	512
1081 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 293	Sept. 24	Reports that M. Daladier and M. Bonnet hope to arrive in London on afternoon of September 25.	512
1082 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 522	Sept. 25	Urges that strongest recommendation possible be addressed to Czechoslovak Government by H.M.G. and French Government that former should send envoy with wide powers immediately to approach German Government direct on subject of occupation of Sudetenland. Records conversation on this proposal with Herr von Ribbentrop and State Secretary and expresses opinion that only immediate surrender by Czechs of territory which they have agreed to give up can save them from disaster.	512
1083 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 294	Sept. 25	Records conversation with President of Finance Commission of Senate who stated that a large majority of the French were against war: he felt that further pressure should be put on Czechoslovak Government.	513
1084 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 295	Sept. 25	Reports that Ministerial Council has been summoned and that General Gamelin has been in close consultation with M. Daladier.	514
1085 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 727	Sept. 25	Reports that Czechoslovak Government readily agree to transmit reply to German Memorandum through Prime Minister: they promise an answer during the day.	514
1086 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 296	Sept. 25	Transmits text of communiqué issued to Havas by German Embassy respecting Czechoslovak situation but French Government have not yet decided whether it shall be published.	514
1087 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 525	Sept. 25	Submits estimate of situation and expresses opinion that only hope of preventing or at least localizing war is for H.M.G. to make it absolutely clear at Prague that Czechoslovak Government must accept German plan or forfeit claim to further support from Western Powers.	515
1088 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 735	Sept. 25	States that in English translation of German Memorandum, as telegraphed, crucial date is given as October 13 but German text says October 1: asks which is correct.	516

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
1089 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 299	Sept. 25	Reports that he understands that MM. Daladier and Bonnet have gone to London with a limited mandate beyond which they must consult their colleagues.	516
1090 TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 414	Sept. 25	Instructions to assure Herr Hitler that statement alleged to have been broadcast by Czechoslovak Government that Czechoslovak mobilization had been ordered with knowledge, advice, and approval of British and French Governments is inaccurate. Public statement regarding matter will appear in British Press on September 26.	517
1091 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 739	Sept. 25	Reports that reply of Czechoslovak Government to German Memorandum will not be ready until evening of September 26. Czechoslovak Government wish to send a copy to Czechoslovak Minister in London as quickly as possible and ask whether H.M.G. can send an aeroplane out for this purpose: they have not yet decided whether to send a delegate or to leave matter in hands of M. Masaryk and Czechoslovak Minister in Paris.	517
1092 CZECHOSLOVAK MINISTER London	Sept. 25	Letter to Secretary of State stating, on behalf of the Czechoslovak Government, that they regard the demands set out in the German Memorandum as completely unacceptable.	518
1093 ANGLO-FRENCH MEETING	Sept. 25	Record of an Anglo-French conversation held at 10 Downing Street on September 25, at 9.25 p.m.	520
1094 TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 330	Sept. 25	Instructions to ascertain views of certain prominent public men and also of commercial and financial circles regarding situation: asks for explanation of reference in No. 1076.	535
1095 *MR. STRANG	Sept. 26	Note recording telephone conversations with M. Masaryk and H.M. Legation at Prague regarding letter received from Czechoslovak Minister (No. 1092).	536
1096 ANGLO-FRENCH MEETING	Sept. 26	Record of an Anglo-French conversation held at No. 10 Downing Street on September 26 at 11.20 a.m.	536
1097 PRIME MINISTER	Sept. 26	Letter to Herr Hitler informing him of Czechoslovak Government's refusal to accept terms of German Memorandum and urging settlement by negotiation.	541

# CHAPTER XI

Sir H. Wilson's conversations of September 26 and 27 with Herr Hitler: negotiations preceding the Munich Conference: the Munich Conference: Mr. Chamberlain's conversation of September 30 with Herr Hitler. (September 26-30, 1938.)

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
1098 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 526	Sept. 26	Records telephone conversation with Field-Marshal Göring who was informed that meeting was fixed for Sir H. Wilson with Chancellor at 5 p.m., and that this constituted a last effort for peace: Field-Marshal Göring stated that present situation could not be prolonged after October 1 and that if there were general war Poland would be on German side.	543
1099 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 302	Sept. 26	Message for Sir A. Cadogan. Refers to No. 1094 and states that latest views of people in question will be reported as soon as possible: explains reference in No. 1076.	543
1100 To MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 360	Sept. 26	Instructions to explain to Czechoslovak Government that the communication which is being made to the German Chancellor through Sir H. Wilson in no way prejudices position of Czechoslovak Government: proposal is simply to substitute a process of negotiation between Czechoslovak and German Governments for violent military action.	544
1101 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 744	Sept. 26	Reports information received from General Staff regarding maintenance of order, response by Sudetens and Hungarians to mobilization order, German dispositions and mobilization of Czechoslovak and German armies.	544
1102 To SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 72	Sept. 26	Instructions to make representations to Polish Government, in conjunction with French colleague, that if Poland would give guarantee of attitude of benevolent neutrality towards Czechoslovakia, Czechoslovak Government might be prepared to agree to the cession to Poland of Teschen.	545
1103 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 528	Sept. 26	Submits that if H.M.G. contemplate war in support of Czechoslovak refusal to accept German plan, this should be made clear to Herr Hitler at meeting with Sir H. Wilson: suggests lines on which alternative plan might be based.	545
1104 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 745	Sept. 26	Refers to No. 1026 and reports that in view of events he thought it better not to deliver message to President Benes.	546

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
1105 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 303	Sept. 26	Reports that U.S. Ambassador urges that it would have an excellent effect on Mr. Roosevelt if Prime Minister, M. Daladier, and President Benes could send suitable replies immediately to President's peace appeal.	546
1106 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 304	Sept. 26	Reports that French public opinion has undergone complete change since Herr Hitler's last demands became known: President of Chamber states that an overwhelming majority in the Chamber will now be for resistance.	546
1107 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 306	Sept. 26	Reports that Ministry of Foreign Affairs state that M. Daladier's reply to President Roosevelt has been published.	547
1108 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 747	Sept. 26	Transmits summary of a statement broadcast by Czechoslovak wireless on September 25 regarding the circumstances in which Czechoslovak mobilization was ordered.	547
1109 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 750	Sept. 26	Reports that suggestion is being circulated in Prague, presumably from German sources, that Memorandum hardly raises question of principle, but relates in substance merely to execution of surrenders to which Czechoslovak Government have already agreed. Actual effect of German Memorandum would be to cut Czechoslovakia to pieces.	549
1110 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 749	Sept. 26	Reports impressions of French Minister after interview with President Benes.	549
1111 To SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 419	Sept. 26	Message for Sir H. Wilson from Prime Minister instructing him to make it clear to Herr Hitler that if Czechoslovakia were attacked, France would support her and Great Britain would then be brought in.	550
1112 CZECHOSLOVAK MINISTER London	Sept. 26	Transmits reply of Czechoslovak Government to enquiry from Prime Minister whether Czechoslovak Government would take part in an international conference attended by Germany and other Powers to consider the Anglo-French plan.	550
1113 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 529	Sept. 26	Message from Military Attaché describing position on both sides of German-Czech frontier: states his general impression that Czech morale is not very good, especially if forced to fight alone.	551
1114 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 753	Sept. 26	Reports that Herr Kundt's view of ethnical line in N.W. Bohemia is substantially more favourable to Czechs than red area on German map.	552



NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
1115 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 530	Sept. 26	Message for Prime Minister from Sir H. Wilson reporting stormy interview with Herr Hitler during which latter stipulated October 1 as the date for complete evacuation, but agreed that a meeting between Czechoslovak and German representatives could take place provided the Memorandum were accepted by Czechoslovak Government.	552
1116 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 530 Part II	Sept. 26	Continuation of No. 1115. In view of intense emotion of Herr Hitler and frequent references to his speech to be delivered in the evening, Sir H. Wilson thought it better not to deliver message: further interview fixed for morning of September 27 when, if Herr Hitler has left no loophole in his speech, Sir H. Wilson proposes to deliver message in suitable terms and come away.	353
1117 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 531	Sept. 26	Suggests that it is for consideration whether to advise Czechoslovak Government immediately to communicate direct with German Government offering to meet them to discuss cession in accordance with Anglo-French plan, and to evacuate Egerland at once.	553
1118 NOTES OF CONVERSATION Berlin	Sept. 26	Notes of a conversation between Sir H. Wilson and Herr Hitler at Berlin on September 26 at which Sir N. Henderson, Mr. Kirkpatrick, Herr von Ribbentrop, and Herr Schmidt were present.	554
1119 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 621 Saving	Sept. 26	Reports opinion in financial and business circles regarding possibility of war.	558
1120 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 622 Saving	Sept. 26	Transmits three questions from French Government on the assumption that, as result of German aggression on Czechoslovakia, France mobilized and proceeded to act of war against Germany.	558
1121 To SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 423	Sept. 27	Message for Sir H. Wilson from Prime Minister stating that after violent attack on President Benes, H.M.G. consider it useless to ask Czechoslovak Government to approach Germans with fresh offer: transmits text of statement to be issued to Press stating that H.M.G. feel themselves morally responsible for carrying out of promises made by Czechoslovak Government provided that German Government will agree to settlement of terms and conditions of transfer by discussion and not by force.	559

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
1122 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 307	Sept. 27	Reports conversation with President of Senate who felt that war was now practically unavoidable: M. Jeanneney stated that feeling of country was firm: unlikely that Parliament would be summoned at present and formal declaration of war unlikely to be made at outset.	560
1123 To SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 424	Sept. 27	Instructions to transmit immediately to German Government letter from Czechoslovak Minister communicating reply of Czechoslovak Government to German Memorandum of September 23.	560
1124 To MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 366	Sept. 27	Refers to No. 1100 and states that President Benes and President of Council have enquired why, after several weeks of collective negotiation, a procedure seemed now to be proposed which looked like bilateral negotiation: records reply given to Czechoslovak Minister.	561
1125 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 615	Sept. 27	Requests authority to convey to Count Ciano Prime Minister's declaration made after Herr Hitler's speech and to express the hope that Signor Mussolini would use his influence to induce Herr Hitler to accept proposals contained therein.	561
1126 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 534	Sept. 27	Reports conversation with Field-Marshal Göring after meeting with Herr Hitler on September 27: evident that British mediation is at an end and that if Czechoslovak delegates do not arrive at Berlin with full authority to make best terms they can with Germans before 2 p.m. on September 28, Czechoslovakia will be invaded.	561
1127 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 535	Sept. 27	Transmits message for Prime Minister from Sir H. Wilson stating that interview with Herr Hitler has been delayed until 12.15 p.m. Sir H. Wilson urges that Czechoslovak Government be informed immediately of situation and suggests that in the event of their not accepting paragraph 2 of German Memorandum, best course would be to withdraw troops from areas to be occupied leaving Germany to effect a bloodless occupation.	563
1128 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 536	Sept. 27	Transmits message for Prime Minister from Sir H. Wilson recording conversation with Herr Hitler, and delivery of message: reports Herr Hitler's reply to message.	563
1129 NOTES OF CONVERSATION Berlin	Sept. 27	Notes of a conversation between Herr Hitler and Sir H. Wilson at Berlin on September 27.	564
1130 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 759	Sept. 27	Message for War Office stating that General Staff estimate that Germany cannot spare more than about 75 divisions for attack on Czechoslovakia in early stages if France co-operates: transmits observations of Military Attaché thereon.	567

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
1131 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 309	Sept. 27	Reports that Ministerial Council is sitting but M.F.A. states that feeling is more optimistic in Government circles, where Prime Minister's statement is considered most helpful.	567
1132 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 311	Sept. 27	Summarizes letter, in 'Temps' of September 26, by M. Flandin who expressed himself as personally opposed to a military intervention by France in the conflict between the Sudeten Germans and Czechoslovakia.	568
1133 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 312	Sept. 27	Records conversation with M. Blum who expressed warmest admiration for Prime Minister's efforts for peace: M. Blum gave his opinion regarding French attitude if it became clear that Herr Hitler meant to destroy Czechoslovak State.	568
1134 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 537	Sept. 27	Reports that German Minister in Prague told Swedish Minister in Berlin that for first time for weeks past he was optimistic in view of reference in Herr Hitler's speech of September 26 to guarantee for Czechoslovakia: suggested that M. Benes might resign.	569
1135 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 538	Sept. 27	Refers to No. 1123 and states that as Czechoslovak rejection of Memorandum was intimated at interview with Herr Hitler on September 26 it seems unnecessary and unwise to communicate terms of refusal.	569
1136 To MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 367	Sept. 27	Transmits message for immediate delivery to President Benes from Prime Minister informing him that German forces have orders to cross Czechoslovak frontier unless Czechoslovak Government have accepted German terms by 2 p.m. on September 28.	570
1137 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 339	Sept. 27	Instructions to inform French Government of terms of No. 1140 and urge them to support H.M.G. in their effort to secure a reasonable procedure for settlement.	570
1138 To MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 369	Sept. 27	Instructions to inform Czechoslovak Government of action taken in No. 1140 and urge them to agree to scheme proposed.	570
1139 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 313	Sept. 27	Reports conversation with M. Bonnet who expressed warmest approval of Prime Minister's statement: M. Bonnet felt that everything possible must be done to avert conflict for which France and Great Britain ill-prepared and suggested compromise which might be put forward.	571
1140 To SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 428	Sept. 27	Instructions to submit to Herr Hitler proposals of H.M.G. for the orderly transfer of territory which Czechoslovak Government have agreed to cede.	572

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
1141 FRENCH EMBASSY London	Sept. 27	Transmits text of a communiqué shortly to be published concerning French attitude towards German-Czech crisis.	573
1142 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 540	Sept. 27	Discusses position and urges that if war is to be avoided strongest pressure is necessary at once at Prague and Paris.	574
1143 TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 342	Sept. 27	Instructions to speak to M.F.A. or President of Council regarding necessity, in view of possibility that Czechoslovakia may be overrun, for close co-operation of Great Britain and France, especially as regards measures which would be likely to start a world war: French Government to be asked whether they agree that any action of an offensive character should only be taken after previous consultation and agreement.	575
1144 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 545	Sept. 27	Transmits translation of letter from Chancellor, in reply to Prime Minister's letter of September 26, which Herr Hitler would like included in White Paper.	576
1145 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 542	Sept. 27	Reports conversation with Czechoslovak Chargé d'Affaires regarding probable outcome of Czechoslovak Government's refusal to accept German Memorandum.	578
1146 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 317	Sept. 27	Reports views of M. Louis Marin on attitude of French public towards crisis.	579
1147 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 760	Sept. 27	Transmits summary of statement broadcast by Czechoslovak wireless on September 26 regarding reasons why Czechoslovak Government could not accept German Memorandum.	580
1148 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 767	Sept. 27	Reports views of Military Attaché on morale of Czechoslovak army; considers that it is likely to render a good account of itself.	581
1149 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 766	Sept. 27	Reports that message contained in No. 1136 has been delivered to President Benes: President stated that he would immediately convoke Government to take a decision.	582
1150 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 318	Sept. 27	Refers to No. 1143: reports that according to M.F.A., French Government are in entire agreement not to take any offensive measures without previous consultation with and agreement by H.M.G.	582
1151 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 319	Sept. 27	Reports that French Government believe that instructions sent to H.M. Ambassador at Berlin in No. 1140 will not satisfy German Government: French Government will await result of Sir N. Henderson's <i>démarche</i> and if it has been unsuccessful they will propose a rather more extended German occupation.	582

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
1152 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 624 Saving	Sept. 27	Refers to record of conversation with French Ministers on September 25 and explains that German Memorandum was in the hands of M. Daladier on night of September 24.	583
1153 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 770	Sept. 27	Refers to No. 1138 and reports action taken: M.F.A. stated that he could not reply at once but his first impression of proposal seemed to be favourable.	583
1154 FRENCH EMBASSY London	Sept. 27	<i>Aide-mémoire</i> outlining suggestions which might be made to German Government with view to easing tension: enquires whether H.M.G. concur in proposals.	584
1155 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 546	Sept. 28	Refers to No. 1140 and reports action taken: State Secretary was of opinion that Chancellor would not consider proposal. States opinion that only alternative to war is to compel Czechoslovak Government to yield by informing them that if they do not do so Czechoslovakia will have to fight alone.	584
1156 TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 346	Sept. 28	Refers to Nos. 1158 and 1159 and sends instructions to inform French Government and enlist their support.	586
1157 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 547	Sept. 28	Reports that French Ambassador has been instructed to support British plan and to go farther by agreeing to occupation of Egerland as a whole: considers only chance of averting war is for President Benes to get into touch with German Government immediately and announce his acceptance of German Memorandum.	586
1158 TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 434	Sept. 28	Transmits text of letter from Prime Minister for delivery to Herr Hitler in which Mr. Chamberlain offers to go to Berlin to discuss arrangements for transfer of territory with Chancellor and representative of Czechoslovak Government, together with representatives of France and Italy should Herr Hitler so desire.	587
1159 TO EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 408	Sept. 28	Transmits text of personal message from Prime Minister to Signor Mussolini informing him of contents of No. 1158 and asking him to urge German Chancellor to agree to proposal.	587
1160 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 320	Sept. 28	Message for Prime Minister: repeats views expressed in No. 1076 on the lack of enthusiasm in France for war.	588
1161 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 618	Sept. 28	Reports that Signor Mussolini has instructed Italian Ambassador in Berlin to see Herr von Ribbentrop at once and to say that Signor Mussolini hopes that Herr Hitler will agree to postpone action to be taken at 2 p.m. for at least twenty-four hours so as to allow Signor Mussolini time to endeavour to find a peaceful settlement.	588

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
1162 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 550	Sept. 28	Reports that he has given Field-Marshal Göring a brief idea of H.M.G.'s plan and asked for his good offices: French Ambassador is to see Herr Hitler at 11.15 with French plan: states that he has asked for meeting with Chancellor to communicate message in No. 1158.	589
1163 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 322	Sept. 28	Refers to No. 1156 and reports that French Government have promised to send immediate instructions to their Representatives in Berlin and Rome to support action of H.M. Ambassadors.	589
1164 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 323	Sept. 28	Reports that French Ambassador at Berlin had an interview with Herr Hitler at 11.15 and that French Ambassador in London will inform Secretary of State of result.	590
1165 TO EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 411	Sept. 28	Instructions to communicate gist of No. 1140 to Italian Government and urge them to use their influence with Herr Hitler in favour of acceptance of plan.	590
1166 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 621	Sept. 28	Reports that at Signor Mussolini's request Herr Hitler has agreed to postpone mobilization for twenty-four hours.	590
1167 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 622	Sept. 28	Refers to No. 1159 and reports that Signor Mussolini will advise Herr Hitler to accept proposals for a Conference at Berlin and ask to be represented.	590
1168 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 623	Sept. 28	Reports that French Chargé d'Affaires has received instructions to support initiative of H.M.G. with Italian Government: strongly deprecates such action.	591
1169 TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 436	Sept. 28	Requests immediate report as to French Ambassador's interpretation of phrase 'Egerland as a whole'.	591
1170 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 773	Sept. 28	Transmits message from Military Attaché regarding state of Czechoslovak mobilization.	591
1171 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 551	Sept. 28	Reports that issue is still in balance and urges that House of Commons should not aggravate situation by attacks on Herr Hitler and National Socialism.	592
1172 SIR A. CADOGAN .	Sept. 28	Note of telephone conversation with Sir N. Henderson recording latter's interview with Herr Hitler when he delivered the Prime Minister's message. Chancellor stated he was not able to give a definite answer as he was in communication with the Italian Government, but hoped to give a reply later in the day.	592
1173 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 776	Sept. 28	Transmits observations on suggestion that President Benes might resign.	593

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
1174 SIR A. CADOGAN	Sept. 28	Note of telephone conversation with Sir N. Henderson who stated that Herr Hitler invites the Prime Minister to meet him at Munich on morning of September 29; M. Daladier and Signor Mussolini also invited.	593
1175 U.K. DELEGATION Geneva Tel. No. 47 L.N.	Sept. 28	Discusses possibility of an appeal, to the Council of the League of Nations.	594
1176 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 327	Sept. 28	Reports that substance of No. 1179 has been communicated to M.F.A. and that he has promised to instruct French Minister in Prague to concert with Mr. Newton in representations to Czechoslovak Government.	595
1177 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 324	Sept. 28	Reports that French Ambassador in Berlin was instructed, if <i>démarche</i> of H.M. Ambassador were unsuccessful, to approach German Government and support main lines of British proposals but to suggest occupation by German troops of larger area.	595
1178 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 777	Sept. 28	Reports that Czechoslovak reply regarding British plan is unlikely to reach Foreign Office before Parliament meets on September 28, but that it will be given with least possible delay.	596
1179 TO EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 415	Sept. 28	Transmits account of Sir N. Henderson's interview with Herr Hitler when he delivered personal message from Prime Minister. Instructions sent to H.M. Minister at Prague to urge Czechoslovak Government to agree to British plan.	596
1180 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 552 Part I	Sept. 28	Reports interview with Herr Hitler when Prime Minister's personal message delivered to him.	597
1181 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 552 Part II	Sept. 28	Continuation of No. 1180.	598
1182 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 552 Part III	Sept. 28	Continuation of No. 1181: transmits observations on course of interview.	598
1183 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 325	Sept. 28	Reports that M. Daladier will leave for Munich on morning of September 29 with M. Léger.	599
1184 TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 384	Sept. 28	Instructions to inform President Benes of Prime Minister's acceptance of invitation of Herr Hitler to meet him in Munich on September 29 in company with Signor Mussolini and M. Daladier.	599

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
1185 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 326	Sept. 28	Reports that M.F.A. has promised written account of M. François-Poncet's conversation with Herr Hitler: chief pre-occupation of Herr Hitler seems to have been concerning the 200,000 Sudeten refugees: M. Bonnet and General Gamelin are meeting shortly to produce a plan for occupation of certain Sudeten areas by German troops and perhaps suggested occupation of others by French, British, and possibly Italian troops.	600
1186 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 624	Sept. 28	Reports that in speaking of Italian participation on side of Germany if war broke out, Count Ciano remarked that Italy's interests, honour, and pledged word required that she should side actively with Germany.	600
1187 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 625	Sept. 28	Reports that Prime Minister's personal message to Signor Mussolini and message Prime Minister had sent to Herr Hitler given to M.F.A.: latter deprecated interview with Signor Mussolini.	600
1188 TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 385	Sept. 28	Instructions to endeavour to obtain without delay Czechoslovak Government's acceptance in principle of British plan and time-table: they should also be advised to have suitable representative authorised to speak on their behalf available to go to Munich on September 29.	601
1189 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 557	Sept. 28	Reports that French Ambassador's interview with Herr Hitler roughly followed his own.	601
1190 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 627	Sept. 28	Reports that Signor Mussolini has accepted Herr Hitler's invitation to meeting at Munich.	601
1191 TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 352	Sept. 28	Refers to No. 1120 and transmits replies to questions put by French Government.	602
1192 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 620	Sept. 28	Refers to No. 1161 and transmits full account of interview with M.F.A.	602
1193 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 536	Sept. 28	Reports details of French proposal for German military occupation of Egerland.	603
1194 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 784	Sept. 28	Transmits personal message for Prime Minister from President Benes begging Mr. Chamberlain to do nothing at Munich which would put Czechoslovakia in a worse situation than under Anglo-French proposals.	604
1195 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 786	Sept. 28	Reports statement by President Benes that a reply containing certain qualifications was being drafted: he was earnestly begged to put forward alternatives with definite times and dates, if on any point Czechoslovak Government found the plan unacceptable.	604

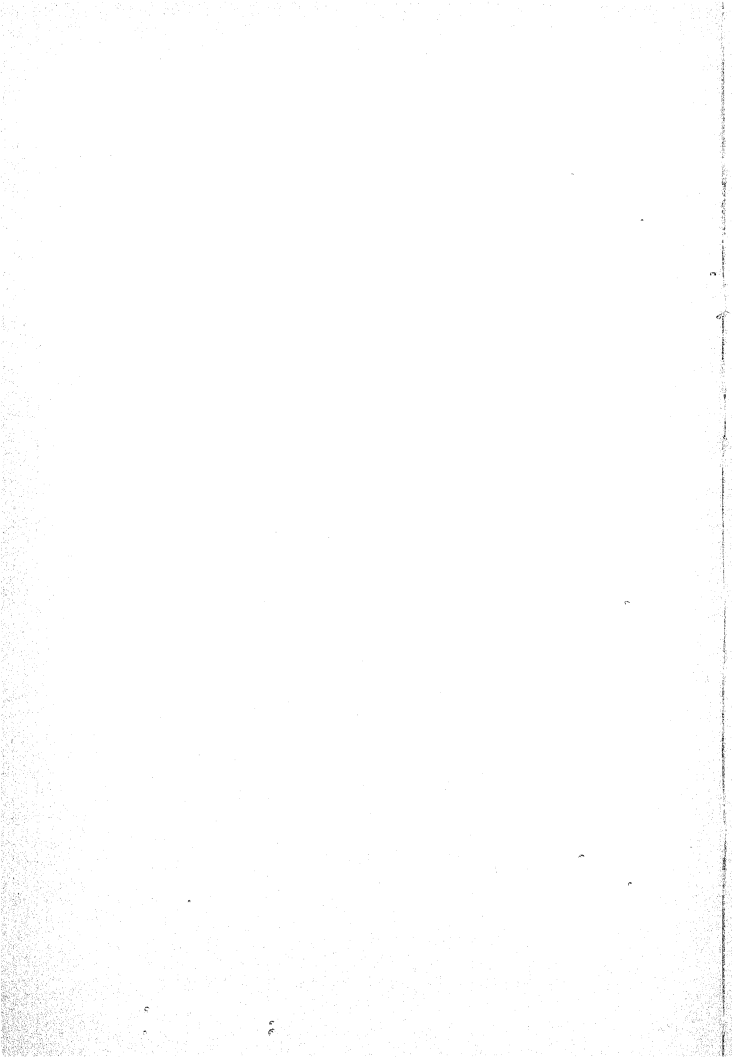


NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
1196 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 787	Sept. 28	Transmits résumé of provisional reply from President Benes regarding British plan and time-table. Both are accepted in principle with certain modifications. Full reply will not be available until early hours of September 29.	605
1197 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 632 Saving	Sept. 28	Reports reception by M. Daladier and his Chef de Cabinet of the President of the Socialist Radical Group and other parliamentary representatives, who urged that everything should be done to safeguard peace.	605
1198 CZECHOSLOVAK MINISTER London	Sept. 28	Letter to Mr. Harvey transmitting text of message conveyed by telephone regarding President Benes' wish to have a representative of Czechoslovak Government at hand at Munich Conference to plead the Czechoslovak cause.	606
1199 M. BONNET Paris	Sept. 28	Record of conversation of French Ambassador in Berlin with Herr Hitler on September 28.	607
1200 EARL OF PERTH Rome	Sept. 28	Transmits record of conversation with U.S. Ambassador who gave an account of his interview with Signor Mussolini and Count Ciano on September 28: Signor Mussolini informed him that he had prevailed upon Herr Hitler to stop movement of German army which was destined to take place at 2 o'clock.	608
1201 CZECHOSLOVAK MINISTER London	Sept. 28	Transmits text of message received from Czechoslovak Government in which it is denied that there is any truth in the assertion that President Benes told M. Masaryk on the telephone that he was not ready to carry out the Anglo-French plan and that the latter informed President Benes of his negotiations with the Opposition in London.	609
1202 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 1099	Sept. 28	Transmits record of conversation of Military Attaché with Colonel Petitbon, General Gamelin's most confidential Staff Officer, regarding the value of the Czechoslovak army and its capacity for resistance.	609
1203 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 788	Sept. 29	Transmits summary in translation of Czechoslovak Government's reply to British plan and time-table.	610
1204 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 330	Sept. 29	Refers to Nos. 1180-2 and reports that M.F.A. has agreed to instruct French Minister at Prague to concert with Mr. Newton and to make a joint <i>démarche</i> to President Benes.	612
1205 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 790	Sept. 29	Reports Military Attaché's opinion that in considering time-table for plan regard should be had to effect on it of mobilization and subsequent concentration.	612

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
1206 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 331	Sept. 29	Reports M.F.A.'s anxiety that an arrangement should be reached over the Sudeten question at Munich at almost any price.	613
1207 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 791	Sept. 29	Transmits corrections to be made in summary of Czechoslovak Government's reply (No. 1203).	613
1208 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 333	Sept. 29	Reports that members of German colony were informed by German Embassy on September 28 that it was doubtful whether situation would arise which would compel them to leave Paris.	614
1209 TO BRITISH DELEGATION Munich Tel. No. 1	Sept. 29	Reports that M. Mastny, Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin, and M. Lisicki, Counsellor of Legation in London, are proceeding to Munich to be at the disposal of British and French delegates for purposes of information only.	614
1210 TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 388	Sept. 29	Instructions to inform Czechoslovak Government that their observations as regards proposed time-table have been communicated to the Prime Minister who will bear in mind the points to which Czechoslovak Government attach importance: they should, however, be reminded that to achieve results which would enable direct negotiations between Germany and Czechoslovakia to be initiated, they should be prepared to give Mr. Chamberlain a wide discretion.	614
1211 H. M. CONSUL-GENERAL Vienna Tel. No. 41	Sept. 29	Reports that Officer Commanding air defences in Vienna has given instructions that by evening of September 30 direct telegraph and telephone communication must be established between Vienna and military aerodrome near Budapest.	615
1212 SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 560	Sept. 29	Message from Military Attaché transmitting information regarding military position in Czech frontier area and recording conversation with General von Tippleskirch.	615
1213 TO BRITISH DELEGATION Munich Tel. No. 5	Sept. 29	Suggests lines on which an agreed compromise might be obtained regarding points 3 and 4 of German Memorandum.	616
1214 VISCOUNT CHILSTON Moscow Tel. No. 186	Sept. 29	Reports representations by U.S. Chargé d'Affaires to Soviet Government suggesting that Head of Soviet State or of Soviet Government should address a personal appeal for preservation of peace to Germany and Czechoslovakia: reply expressed view that an international conference would prove more effective.	617
1215 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 795	Sept. 29	Refers to No. 1203 and transmits reply of Czechoslovak Government to British plan and time-table.	618

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
1216 TO BRITISH DELEGATION Munich Tel. No. 10	Sept. 29	States that information has been received from moderate circles in Germany that firm attitude taken by H.M.G. during last few days and especially mobilization of fleet have had considerable effect on German public opinion.	620
1217 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 795 (a)	Sept. 29	Refers to No. 1210 and states that instructions will be carried out as soon as possible: comments on contribution which Czechoslovak Government has made to peace by accepting Anglo-French plan and hopes that efforts will be made to allay their fears that they will be attacked nevertheless.	620
1218 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 801	Sept. 29	Reports agreement of President Benes to immediate occupation of Asch and Egerland generally outside line of fortifications on condition that British Legion were at frontier.	621
1219 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 636 Saving	Sept. 29	Reports anti-war propaganda by M. Flandin: proclamation issued in Press and placarded in Paris declaring that French people were being deceived.	622
1220 CZECHOSLOVAK MINISTER London	Sept. 29	States that M. Mastny, Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin, accompanied by M. Lisicky, Counsellor of Legation in London, is proceeding to Munich.	623
1221 TO VISCOUNT CHILSTON Moscow No. 608	Sept. 29	Records conversation with Soviet Ambassador when it was explained to him why Soviet Government were not asked to send a representative to the Munich Conference.	623
1222 TO SIR R. LINDSAY Washington No. 787	Sept. 29	Records conversation with U.S. Ambassador: thanks of H.M.G. for the help that the President had given by his intervention during the last few days.	625
1223 TO EARL OF PERTH Rome No. 1451	Sept. 29	Records conversation with Italian Ambassador regarding Munich Conference and support which Signor Mussolini had afforded in obtaining Herr Hitler's agreement to participate in it.	626
1224 BRITISH DELEGATION Munich Tel. No. 1	Sept. 30	Transmits text of Agreement reached at Munich on September 29 between Germany, United Kingdom, France, and Italy.	627
1225 BRITISH DELEGATION Munich Tel. No. 2 Saving to Prague (Tel. No. 2 to F.O.)	Sept. 30	Telegram to Prague from Prime Minister, stating that text of Agreement reached by Four Powers has been communicated to Czechoslovak Minister at Berlin for transmission to Czechoslovak Government, and instructing H.M. Minister to see President immediately and urge on him acceptance of plan: action should be taken jointly, if possible, with French Minister.	629

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
1226 BRITISH DELEGATION Munich Tel. No. 3	Sept. 30	Refers to No. 1224 and explains scope of Zones 1, 2, 3, and 4: proposed that international commission should meet at Berlin on afternoon of September 30.	630
1227 SIR H. WILSON	Sept. 29- 30	Note on meetings at Munich which resulted in the Agreement of the Four Powers for the settlement of the Czechoslovak question.	630
1228 NOTES OF CONVERSA- TION Munich	Sept. 30	Record of conversation between Prime Minister and Herr Hitler on September 30 in Munich.	635
1229 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 821	Sept. 30	Reports that in broadcast at 5 o'clock President of the Council announced that Czechoslovak Government had decided to accept terms of Munich Agreement as they had been given to understand that in the event of refusal they could expect no assistance.	640
1230 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 644 Saving	Sept. 30	Reports that Munich Agreement unanimously approved by Cabinet Council on evening of September 30: decided that Parliament should be summoned on October 4, so that M. Daladier might explain Agreement.	641
1231 EARL OF PERTH Rome No. 877	Sept. 30	Records course of events in Rome on morning of September 28 which led to postponement for twenty-four hours of mobilization of German army and invasion of Czechoslovakia.	641
APPENDIX I Additional Letters from Sir N. Henderson, August-September, 1938.			646
APPENDIX II Additional Correspondence on Lord Runciman's Mission.			656
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## CHAPTER VII

### German military measures: Lord Runciman's negotiations in Prague: Sir J. Simon's speech at Lanark on August 27. (July 24–August 27, 1938.)

No. 538

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 25)*

*No. 327 Saving: Telegraphic [C 7501/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 23, 1938

French Minister saw President Benes on the eve of the President's important meeting with his Government last Tuesday July 19 and spoke to him very plainly in accordance with instructions received from M. Bonnet personally in Paris over the week-end.

2. According to account given to me by my French colleague he pointed out that Herr Henlein's success in recent communal elections had made a considerable impression abroad, that Czechoslovakia could not count on any effective assistance from Little Entente or Russia in the event of a conflict with Germany and that cordial as Anglo-French relations were His Majesty's Government had retained complete freedom of action for such an eventuality. If a rupture in Sudeten negotiations occurred and precipitated serious consequences France would find herself in a very disagreeable position. Of course if Czechoslovakia were directly invaded by Germany the French treaties with Czechoslovakia would come into play. But if serious troubles broke out in the interior and Czechoslovak Government seemed to be in any way to blame it might be very difficult to persuade Frenchmen that they must fight to protect Czechoslovakia against international complications. Treaties always require interpretation and it was very important that the circumstances in which they were invoked should be as clear and favourable as possible.

3. My French colleague complained too of Czechoslovak press and of impression of chauvinism made by certain Czech officials on French journalists. He also complained of delays and of embarrassment caused by the fact that official forecasts of progress were never fulfilled, e.g. he had not yet received text of Government proposals.

4. My French colleague believes Dr. Benes was considerably moved by these representations which were certainly very timely coming on top of those which I had already made in anticipation of same meeting between President and Cabinet. M. de Lacroix subsequently spoke in a similar sense to Dr. Hodza.

Repeated to Berlin Saving. Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 24)*  
*No. 325 Telegraphic [C 7468/1941/18]*

BERLIN, July 24, 1938

If Your Lordship makes contemplated statement about Czechoslovakia in the House of Commons [*sic*]<sup>1</sup> on July 27 I venture to suggest that whatever you may say about Germany it should *not* take the form of any repetition of warning in the form given on May 21. However salutary (as I feel it was) the warning may have been on that occasion the Chancellor was able to adopt an attitude of injured innocence and without more definite proofs than we now have of German intention to be aggressive I feel on this occasion it would be ill-advised, quite apart from my own belief that not only German army and people but also German Government as distinct from forward section of Nazi party, are as frightened as we are of an incident which may precipitate a general war, re-affirmation of warning would indicate little confidence on your part in assurances recently conveyed to you through Captain Wiedemann. Evidence of such mistrust as well as renewed blow to Hitler's prestige might well have contrary effect to that desired and drive over the edge rather than hold him back from it. We are more likely in my opinion to strengthen the Chancellor's hand against extremists if we show belief in his good faith than if we reiterated a warning and threat which have already been taken to heart.

Would not rather some reference to necessary German co-operation by means of advice to Sudetens be preferable? Might it for instance not take a form somewhat on the following lines:—'Since we are pressing Czechoslovak Government to be generous and conciliatory we confidently count on Germany to give similar advice to their kinsmen with a view to avoiding a deadlock the consequences of which might be incalculable'?

In my opinion similar considerations have weight in respect of any possible official representations which may be contemplated (see the end of your conversation in Paris with French Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs as recorded in Paris telegram No. 280<sup>2</sup> Saving of July 20).

<sup>1</sup> Lord Halifax spoke in the House of Lords on July 27: see *Parl. Deb.* 5th Ser., H. of L., vol. 110, cols. 1273-87. The Prime Minister spoke on foreign affairs in the House of Commons on July 26: see *Parl. Deb.* 5th Ser., H. of C., vol. 338, cols. 2950-63. See also below, No. 546.

<sup>2</sup> In error for telegram No. 480 Saving, No. 523 in Volume I of this Series.

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 25)*  
*No. 397 Telegraphic [C 7456/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 25, 1938

My telegram No. 394.<sup>1</sup>

It will be seen that Czechoslovak Government have taken a very prompt

<sup>1</sup> No. 537 in Volume I of this Series.

initiative in the sense hoped for in paragraph 10 of your Saving telegram No. 125.<sup>2</sup> This has no doubt cost them considerable effort.

2. It was too much to hope that they would adopt procedure indicated in paragraph 12 of that telegram. The President and Government and probably still more the Czech coalition parties and public opinion are very sensitive to any suggestion that a political party—and the opposition one—should be regarded as on the same footing as Government of the State.

3. I trust that above considerations will be borne in mind when any publicity is given to initiative of the Czechoslovak Government and that I may be authorized at once to express your appreciation of this evidence of their desire to omit no means which may be open to them to bring about a solution.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris Saving.

<sup>2</sup> Apparently an error for telegram No. 25 Saving, No. 508 in Volume I of this Series.

### No. 541

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*  
*No. 298 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 7453/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, July 25, 1938, 2.45 p.m.

You will see from Prague telegrams Nos. 393<sup>1</sup> and 394<sup>2</sup> that Czechoslovak Government accept idea that His Majesty's Government should nominate an investigator and mediator who would seek, acting independently of His Majesty's Government (see Prague telegram No. 394), to elaborate proposals that might harmonize views of Czechoslovak Government and Sudeten Party.

2. To enable him to function, it would be necessary to have the willing collaboration of Sudeten Party also.

3. In addition His Majesty's Government feel it would be most desirable that the proposal should have the good will of the German Government.

4. It had been the intention of His Majesty's Government not to make this proposal public until deadlock had evidently been reached in the negotiations, but in view of the complaints made on behalf of the [Sudeten] Party as to the progress of negotiations, and of the fact that Czechoslovak Government have now accepted the idea, His Majesty's Government consider that the moment has come for giving effect to this proposal without further delay, provided that they can be assured that all concerned will do their best to make the proposal efficacious and they are accordingly taking steps to place the proposal before the leaders of the Sudeten Party. In any case His Majesty's Government consider it inevitable that the proposal should be made public early this week.

5. It will be less difficult for the Czechoslovak Government to collaborate on these lines if it can be represented that initiative in proposal had been theirs—and that His Majesty's Government had acceded to it. His Majesty's

<sup>1</sup> No. 536 in Volume I of this Series.

<sup>2</sup> No. 537 in Volume I of this Series.



Government would accordingly propose in any public announcement to present the matter in that light.

6. Please at once inform German Government confidentially of the proposal, indicating the individual we have in mind, and urge them to use whatever influence they may have to induce acceptance on part of Sudeten-deutschen Party, whom we are approaching direct through His Majesty's Minister in Prague.

7. His Majesty's Government hope that when announcing proposal they may be able to state at the same time that it is generally welcomed by all those concerned.

8. His Majesty's Government also trust that the German Government will make it clear to the Sudeten Party that the course proposed has their full approval, and that the German Government will give the mediator all the assistance they can in his difficult task by advocating publicly and through the Press patience and moderation in all circumstances.

Repeated to Paris No. 233, Prague No. 205, Warsaw Saving, and Budapest Saving.

No. 542

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 206 Telegraphic [C 7453/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 25, 1938, 3.0 p.m.*

Your telegrams Nos. 393<sup>1</sup> and 394<sup>2</sup>.

1. I agree that it is desirable that Lord Runciman should now go to Prague with as little delay as possible. The next step is to make sure that the Sudeten leaders are prepared to treat with him.

2. The best way to secure this will be for you to ask Dr. Hodza's concurrence in your pressing the Sudeten leaders to collaborate in rendering this proposal effective. That should not exclude Dr. Hodza from approaching them simultaneously on behalf of the Czechoslovak Government, if he attaches importance to this. At the same time, we also propose to press Herr Henlein strongly in the same sense. This will be done through the usual channels.<sup>3</sup>

3. It may be of assistance to you to know that a source in close contact with Henlein, and fresh from a conversation with him, spontaneously expressed the view here on July 21 that if the two sides are left to themselves, no settlement will be reached and that there will be a complete deadlock unless some form of mediation from outside is employed. An outsider would see ways of compromise that would be invisible to Czech and Sudeten eyes, and he urged that a private mediator should be sent out as soon as possible.

<sup>1</sup> No. 536 in Volume I of this Series.

<sup>2</sup> No. 537 in Volume I of this Series.

<sup>3</sup> For this method of communicating with Herr Henlein, see Volume I of this Series, No. 338, note 3, and No. 353, note 1.

4. Meanwhile, I am instructing His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin to inform the German Government of Lord Runciman's proposed mission, and to press them to use their influence to persuade the Sudeten leaders to treat with him (see my telegram to Berlin No. 298).<sup>4</sup>

5. With reference to your telegram No. 397,<sup>5</sup> I authorize you to convey to Dr. Hodza appreciation of His Majesty's Government of the effort they are prepared to make in search of satisfactory solution.

Repeated to Berlin, Paris, Warsaw and Budapest.

<sup>4</sup> No. 541.

<sup>5</sup> No. 540.

### No. 543

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 207 Telegraphic [C 7371/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 25, 1938, 6.0 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 391.<sup>1</sup>

1. Reply on the following lines was given orally on July 22 to source mentioned in my telegram No. 199.<sup>2</sup>

2. The assurance which it is now wished to convey to Henlein was given by the President of the Council early in July and acknowledged in an official communiqué issued by the Sudeten Party on July 4.<sup>3</sup> Attention was also especially drawn to the Government communiqué of July 17.<sup>4</sup>

3. There was good reason to believe that satisfactory assurances would be forthcoming, but we should consider it unreasonable for the Sudeten leaders to interpret the assurances in a sense which would enable them to block legislation or make unacceptable conditions for its introduction. Continuation of discussion at this stage must clearly be for the purpose of reaching agreement and not be used to create a breach or protract a deadlock. Sudeten leaders must therefore make a constructive contribution as well as the Czechoslovak Government so as to enable an agreed scheme to be submitted to Parliament. Henlein should accordingly give an assurance that when the Government's proposals are communicated, his party will not make them the occasion for a crisis, but will give the Czechoslovak Government adequate time to reply to any comments which the Sudeten Party may have to make on Government's proposals. This seemed to us to be a *sine qua non*. There must be no rupture and no crisis.

4. Intermediary expressed himself as being in agreement and promised to inform Herr Henlein at once.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 533 in Volume I of this Series.

<sup>2</sup> No. 527 in Volume I of this Series.

<sup>3</sup> See No. 474, note 3, in Volume I of this Series.

<sup>4</sup> See No. 525, note 5, in Volume I of this Series.

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 26)*  
*No. 329 Telegraphic [C 7533/1941/18]*

BERLIN, July 25, 1938

Your telegram No. 298.<sup>1</sup>

I informed State Secretary confidentially of proposed appointment of mediator and expressed the hope that the German Government would co-operate by using their good offices with the Sudetens and by advocating patience and moderation in the press and elsewhere. I mentioned that public announcement would represent initiative as having come from Czechoslovakian Government and that you hoped to be able to state that it was welcomed by all concerned i.e. including the German Government.

State Secretary replied that the line steadfastly taken by German Government hitherto was that they would welcome any agreed solution and that he personally had no reason to believe that they would object to any procedure which was calculated to produce such a result.

State Secretary begged me to make it clear that in such an important matter his reply could only be regarded as preliminary and personal. He said that he would try to expedite a definite reply.

I warned him that he should not take it amiss if announcement were made before reply was received as your hand in this respect might be forced through indiscretions in the press. He recognized this and was I think . . .<sup>2</sup> to learn that we were approaching Sudeten party direct through His Majesty's Minister at Prague.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 541.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

No. 545

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 26)*  
*No. 401 Telegraphic [C 7536/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 26, 1938

Your telegram No. 206<sup>1</sup> 2nd paragraph.

President of the Council received me the same evening and immediately expressed his concurrence. Sudeten leader Herr Kundt is coming accordingly at my invitation to see me today. Most of the others, with Herr Henlein, are in Breslau for the next few days.

2. I also informed Dr. Hodza in the sense of paragraphs 5 and 4 of above telegram.

3. In view of leakage from Paris in the 'News Chronicle' it was thought

<sup>1</sup> No. 542.

desirable last night to issue communiqué reported in my telegram No. 400.<sup>2</sup> I was consulted beforehand over the telephone and raised no objection hoping that in the circumstances its terms would be more likely to facilitate than to prejudice in various quarters concerned a good reception for Lord Runciman's mission. Ministry of Foreign Affairs have telephoned this morning to say that some further early announcement can hardly be avoided but I have asked them to postpone it if possible until I have seen Herr Kundt and when drafting it to bear in mind Sudeten susceptibilities.

Repeated Paris and Berlin.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. The communiqué, dated July 25, said that various foreign and Czech papers had reported a suggestion to send Lord Runciman to Prague. The Czechoslovak Press Bureau was informed that the suggestion was for a prominent British personage to study the Sudeten question, but that the matter was still under consideration.

#### No. 546

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 209 Telegraphic [C 7595/1941/16]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 26, 1938*

Following is substance of reference to Lord Runciman's mission made by Prime Minister in the course of general statement on foreign affairs in the House of Commons this afternoon:—

'While we have felt that agreement voluntarily come to would be best solution, nevertheless it has begun to appear doubtful whether, without assistance from outside, such a voluntary agreement could take place. In these circumstances His Majesty's Government have been considering whether there was some other way in which they could lend their help to bring negotiators together and in response to request from Czechoslovak Government we have agreed to propose a person with necessary experience and qualities to investigate this subject on the spot and endeavour if need be to suggest means for bringing negotiations to success. Such an investigator and mediator would be independent of His Majesty's Government and of all Governments. He would act only in personal capacity and it would be necessary that he should have all facilities and information placed at his disposal in order to enable him to carry through his task.

'I cannot assert that proposal of that kind will necessarily bring about a solution, but I think it may have two valuable results. First of all it would go far to inform public opinion as to real facts of case and secondly issues which hitherto have appeared intractable may prove under influence of mediator to be less obstinate than we thought.

'Task of anyone who undertakes this duty will be exacting, responsible and delicate and His Majesty's Government feel they are fortunate in having secured from Lord Runciman a promise to undertake it provided he is assured of confidence of Sudeten Germans as well as assistance of Czechoslovak Government.'

Prime Minister subsequently explained, in reply to question, that 'Lord

Runciman would not be an arbitrator but investigator and mediator. He had made the necessary stipulation that he must be acceptable to both sides otherwise he could not undertake task. We had not yet heard from the Sudeten Germans.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Parl. Deb. 5th Ser., H. of C., vol. 338, cols. 2950-63.

#### No. 547

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 27)*

*No. 407 Telegraphic [C 7559/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 26, 1938

My telegram No. 401.<sup>1</sup>

I have had a long and friendly talk with Herr Kundt who seemed quite well disposed to proposal.

(2) I explained that it was only owing to a newspaper leakage that we had not been able to inform the Sudeten German Party in good time beforehand. In order to assist his memory and to prevent misunderstanding I gave Herr Kundt a brief written description in German of the object of Lord Runciman's mission. The following is translation:—

(3) 'The object would be to investigate problem and grounds for differences of opinion at the same time in detail and if necessary act as a mediator with advice and influence. It would be very important that the person concerned should receive every help and that different points of view and the various difficulties should be frankly and fully explained to him by all competent and well informed authorities. He would be completely independent of the British Government and of every other Government.'

(4) In reply to an enquiry of Herr Kundt I said that although I was making my communication to him with the concurrence of the President of the Council it might be better from the point of view of Czech susceptibilities to refrain from any public statement that explanation had been given him by His Majesty's Minister but rather to say if necessary that he had it from an authoritative English quarter. Since then I have heard however that the fact of his visit to me is already known to the press.

(5) In conclusion Herr Kundt authorized me to inform you that the party would welcome any objective study of conditions which might in any way help to lead to a positive result.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 545.

#### No. 548

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 28)*

*No. 331 Saving: Telegraphic [C 7618/4786/18]*

PRAGUE, July 26, 1938

Berlin telegram No. 344 Saving.<sup>1</sup>

While controversy would no doubt be undesirable particularly in present

<sup>1</sup> No. 529 in Volume I of this Series.

circumstances you will have noticed account given by German State Secretary of alleged Czech military movements differs widely from allegations broadcast on German wireless which observers were sent to investigate. The D.N.B. suggested that there had been large troop movements within a very short period of time i.e. the kind of provocative measures which would justify sudden and widespread complaint in German press and on German wireless. No signs of such movements were seen.

Moreover even attenuated account given by Herr Weizsäcker is open to objection. During extensive visit to Czech frontier defences observers found no evidence whatever of a 'renewed strengthening of Czech garrisons in frontier zone'.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

#### No. 549

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 28)*  
*No. 332 Saving: Telegraphic [C 7619/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 26, 1938

Investigations by Observers of political feeling in Sudeten territories lead them to conclude that this feeling depends on local conditions and interests. They have visited, amongst others, localities where extreme Sudeten German party views are known to prevail. Despite this they have not gained the impression that the inhabitants there are wholeheartedly in favour of being incorporated in the Reich. They find extreme elements amongst politicians, amongst youths, and amongst those industrialists and workpeople who are experiencing depressed economic conditions. They find moderate elements at tourist centres, in agricultural districts, and amongst people with memories of pre-war Austria. Sudeten Jews and Communists are naturally opposed to an 'Anschluss'. Further, enthusiastic support of Sudeten German party appears to Observers to be here and there on the wane. But they consider that this tendency is being counteracted by threats, alarmist rumours, and other methods of petty tyranny.

2. His Majesty's Consul at Liberec reports that moderate elements in Sudeten German party there are gaining ground. This may be a sign that widespread enthusiasm amongst Sudeten Germans for incorporation in the Reich prevailing after Austro-German 'Anschluss' is diminishing.

3. General conclusion of Observers is that Sudeten Germans in favour of being incorporated in the Reich are in a majority but not in an overwhelming one. The official Sudeten German party view, that Sudeten population is overwhelmingly in favour of incorporation in the Reich and only restrained by leaders who are working for a solution within Czechoslovak frontiers, should therefore in the opinion of the Observers be no longer entirely accepted.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 30)**No. 265 [C 7692/1941/18]*BRITISH LEGATION, PRAGUE, *July 26, 1938*

His Majesty's Minister at Prague presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit to him the under-mentioned Note verbale from the Czechoslovak Minister for Foreign Affairs.

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 550

*Note verbale handed to H.M. Minister<sup>1</sup>*

Le Gouvernement tchécoslovaque apprécie très hautement l'intérêt constant que le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté manifeste au développement de la situation en Tchécoslovaquie. Il partage entièrement le souci et le désir de ce Gouvernement pour trouver des méthodes et des moyens qui pourraient conduire à une pacification permanente en Europe centrale. C'est pour cette raison qu'il a déjà accueilli très volontiers auprès de la Légation britannique à Prague des observateurs dont l'activité n'a pas manqué d'avoir des résultats heureux.

Dans les projets de lois qui sont actuellement en préparation, le Gouvernement tchécoslovaque veut poser la base solide et définitive à une solution objective, honnête, juste et équitable de la question des nationalités, tout en sauvegardant les intérêts vitaux, l'unité et l'intégrité du pays. Il sera donc heureux de tout appui qui pourra lui être accordé dans cette œuvre et croyant d'être en cela en parfaite communauté de pensée avec le Gouvernement britannique et le Gouvernement français, il prie le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté de vouloir bien indiquer une personnalité qui serait disponible avec ses avis et ses conseils pour aider à surmonter les difficultés qui pourraient éventuellement encore surgir.

Cette personnalité aurait toutes les facilités et toutes les informations qui seraient nécessaires pour l'accomplissement de sa mission. Elle serait indépendante du Gouvernement britannique et de tout autre Gouvernement.

<sup>1</sup> This Note was received by H.M. Minister, and a translation was telegraphed by him to the Foreign Office, on July 23. See Nos. 536-7 in Volume I of this Series.

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson to Viscount Halifax (Received July 29)**[C 7678/1941/18]*BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *July 26, 1938*

Dear Secretary of State,

Your talk with Wiedemann and the Prime Minister's with von Dirksen

have eased my mind in the sense that both confirm my opinion that the Germans, apart from a section of extremists, are just as afraid of war as anybody else—or even more so. Yet nothing will convince the pessimists that Germany is not actually and definitely contemplating war. Personally I am certain to-day that she does not but, like the rest of us, she appreciates the fact that circumstances may be too strong for her, and consequently is prepared or preparing for all emergencies. All the war talk here has its origin in this fact.

*Cui bono* is not a bad basis for argument in policy as well as detective stories. War would doubtless serve the purposes of all the Jews, communists and doctrinaires in the world for whom Nazism is anathema, but it would be a terrible risk to-day for Germany herself and particularly for the new Nazi Germany which Hitler has built up in the past five years. The roots have not yet gone down far enough. That this is not apparent to Hitler I cannot believe. I hate the excessive nationalism of Nazism myself but the remedy of war would be worse than the disease.

On the other hand there is Hitler's prestige and German stupidity. I told Weizsäcker the other day that I should not be the least nervous, if it were not for German stupidity. If they could do a stupid thing at the wrong moment they always went off and did it. He was taken aback but he was unable to deny it. It is, unfortunately, a fact and when—quite apart from this caprice of dictators—one realises the strength of the forces in every country which are praying for war as the only remedy for anti-communism, anti-Judaism and against a strong Germany one must remain nervous. If it comes, it will not be Hitler or the mass of the Germans who have sought it, this year at any rate. They will be, of course, blamed for it. Unjustly, in my opinion: but by my contemporaries my opinion will be regarded as worthless.

I do not envy Lord Runciman the difficult and thankless job which he is undertaking. The Czechs are a pig-headed race and Benes not the least pig-headed among them. And with it all, a master of words and formulae, which sound magnificent but are really empty. Ask anyone who has worked with him at Geneva. I remember well the opinion King Alexander and his Yugoslavs had of him when I was at Belgrade. I perjure myself about him to the Germans but I have few illusions in my heart. And the Germans, from past experience, have less than none and I perjure myself, Heaven forgive me and alas, in vain.

There are two points which I think have to be borne in mind. The first is that so long as the Germans trust us and have confidence in the sincerity and impartiality of our effort, the battle is not lost. But this means that we shall have at long last to put our foot down very firmly and say to Benes 'You must'. He will yield to nothing less. The new Statute has got to be a genuine Nationalities Statute and not a camouflaged Minorities one. This means a fundamental change in the Czech proposals as at present contemplated.

The second point is that the Germans have adopted and will continue to adopt the line that they are not influencing the Sudeten and will not exercise



any pressure on them. Merely to say that we don't believe them, while obvious and necessary, does not alter the situation in the least. It is a definite and set policy, with moreover certain useful aspects from our own and a peace point of view as well as from the German angle. It enables us, for instance, to send observers and Lord Runciman and to act at Prague generally as seems good to us without regard to German criticism. Had Weizsäcker raised objection to the Runciman mission, the retort was obvious.

At the same time it does not bind the German Government to this, that or the other specific solution. If the German Government had clamoured for pre-announced concessions and the Sudeten did not get them, German honour would be involved and it would probably prove impossible to find a compromise solution. To that extent therefore the German attitude is helpful rather than the reverse for the moment. The tug of war will come when the deadlock comes. It is then—but not till then—that we shall have to say to the Germans, 'If we are prepared to put the thumbscrews on Benes, you must help by putting pressure on Henlein to accept this or that, which may be short of his desiderata'.

It will not be easy, for Hitler has assumed the line (see my telegram No. 295<sup>1</sup> of July 4th) that he will put no pressure on the Sudeten and that a non-agreed solution is worthless, in as much as it only means prolonging the tension indefinitely. Unfortunately there is much force in this contention, but if the solution really is a just one we shall have to insist on it. Will it be just? That is the great question. My United States colleague (among others) who is a shrewd and objective observer, will not even admit my 5 to 10 per cent. chance of keeping indefinitely the Sudeten in Czechoslovakia. Are we then merely ramming our heads against a brick wall? And would not the plebiscite to-day be the only practical answer?

I personally do not feel that. The compromise solution may and probably will be only temporary but we must try it out in the interests of world peace. Later it may not be the same danger to world peace and that consideration to me is everything. We may feel a certain inevitable compassion for the Czechs as a small and heroic race (even though their own acts during the last twenty years have not justified it) and superficial and sentimental public opinion in England will cry out, yet the whole is greater than the part and there is much in the present position which is morally untenable. If Germany was a weak country like Hungary and if it was not Nazi, public opinion in England would have adopted a very different outlook to this problem. Yet the basic moral position remains, however big and dangerous Germany may be.

Yours ever,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

<sup>1</sup> No. 469 in Volume I of this Series.

No. 552

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 27, 1.15 p.m.)*  
*No. 332 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 7577/1941/18]*

BERLIN, July 27, 1938

My telegram No. 329.<sup>1</sup>

State Secretary telephoned last night to inform me that he had been in communication with Herr von Ribbentrop on the subject of Runciman Mission. Minister had, he said, complained that public announcement had preceded communication to German Government and that in the circumstances the latter must reserve its attitude and treat matter as one of . . .<sup>2</sup> British concern.

I told State Secretary that I regarded such unhelpful message as quite deplorable and since German Government professed not to influence Sudeten party I trusted that the latter would show more sense and understanding. I suggested leaving German answer as that outlined to me by him on July 26 but though uncomfortable he . . .<sup>2</sup>ed to this on grounds that he had been asked to convey to me the above reply.

Repeated to Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 544.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

No. 553

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson to Mr. Strang (Received July 29)*  
*[C 7648/1941/18]*

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, July 27, 1938

My dear Strang,

Your letter of July 21st<sup>1</sup> on the subject of Germany's military preparations.

I enclose (1) a detailed commentary drawn up by Colonel Mason-MacFarlane on the specific points you mention, and (2) his general remarks thereon.

As you are aware from my reports, the latter are in conformity with my views. In order to form one's opinion one must also try to understand the German point of view. If we were in Germany's place what would we, in the midst of all this war psychosis, be doing: exactly what I think the Germans are today doing, namely (i) omitting nothing, short of actual mobilisation, calculated to prepare the army for all emergencies and (ii) strengthening Germany's defensive fortifications in the west. If there is to be a show down with Czechoslovakia, Germany, for obvious reasons, wants a stalemate in the West as well as to impress upon France that, if she comes to Czechoslovakia's assistance—as she has announced so often and so solemnly that she intends to do, it will cost her dear. The Siegfried line is at any rate not aggressive, so far as France is concerned.

<sup>1</sup> No. 530 in Volume I of this Series.

The reports which you receive and those which reach us in Berlin can in my opinion be attributed to a variety of causes:

(a) Logical and natural precautionary measures in view of the political situation and the war-talk in all countries.

(b) Fear of war, which is almost, if not quite, as general here as in England.

(c) Bluff or intimidation, i.e. to encourage His Majesty's Government to continue their pressure at Prague and to warn the Czechs what to expect if they are not reasonable (incidentally the press campaign has the same basis).

(d) Aggressiveness on the part of the war-party here.

For there is a war-party which would like to make the German Heaven at once without waiting. Moreover its motives are mixed and not solely confined to the bellicose young hotheads or extremists. There are even some Germans who would like a war as affording the only chance of upsetting both a *régime* which they hate and its present gang of leaders. Every Jew and communist in the world probably shares this theory. If I were a German desirous of peace I should be anxious myself. Hence their military precautions.

The only specific comment I would make as regards Colonel Mason-MacFarlane's general remarks is the following. He observes that 'under certain circumstances Hitler will almost certainly march against Czechoslovakia without warning'. I am not so certain that he will begin marching without warning. I think that it is equally possible that he will do nothing irrevocable without giving us a possibly 24 hour chance to prevent the irrevocable. If we want to stop bloodshed, it is then that we would have, without waiting, to say 'Plebiscite'.

Yours ever,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

ENCLOSURE I IN No. 553

BERLIN, July 26, 1938

*The Ambassador.*

Herewith my detailed comments on Mr. Strang's letter of 21st July.<sup>1</sup> I have already submitted my general remarks under my No. 355/34/38<sup>2</sup> of 25th July.

*Para 3.*

Most 'Company Sergeant-Majors' normally live and have lived in barracks. A certain number of married men live out. I cannot get any confirmation of the report that all have now been ordered to live in.

It is the latest policy to give Reserve Personnel of (E) class two periods of 8 to 12 weeks training, and not only one. These training periods not to be at too long interval. Admittedly they generally take place in consecutive years.

Perfectly likely that Army Reservists have been called up in certain cases for training to commence on this date (15th July). Not necessarily ominous.

<sup>1</sup> No. 530 in Volume I of this Series.

<sup>2</sup> Enclosure 2.

*Para 4.*

Quite possible, but I have heard nothing to this effect.

*Para 5.*

Yes. Quite a number of officers are now getting off on leave.

I have already drawn attention to the energy now being expended on hastening up the Western defences. There is also evidence that work has been speeded up on the Polish frontier. I had not heard about the Bahn-schutz being called up. This is interesting, but not necessarily significant.

*Para 6.*

We have never had any doubt,

- a. That the German General Staff have a plan ready for attacking Czecho-Slovakia [*sic*] (and also for any other possible war).
- b. That if Germany decides on aggression the most favourable moment for her is between the harvest and the end of the 'military year'.

*Para 7.*

The whole of this paragraph is perfectly logical. Much of it is true. It might have been written by anyone inclined to appreciate the situation as indicating a probability of Germany's being determined to use force. Whatever they may eventually decide, I cannot believe that the Führer and Göring have already made up their minds to march this autumn.

*Para 8.*

(I) I do not think this is correct.

(II) I cannot imagine even Göring saying 'Hoi! German Armament Industry! Double your output at once!'

(III) Plans for the use of female labour in war have been under consideration by armament works for some time.

(IV) I know of at least two cases of German officers now taking leave with their families in Switzerland. How officers propose to get over the Devisen difficulty if they mean to settle their families in Switzerland seems rather a mystery.

(V) S.S. Grenzpolizei have been employed at many of the frontier customs posts on at any rate the Czech frontier for the past 4 months or more.

F. N. MASON-MACFARLANE  
*Colonel, Military Attaché.*

ENCLOSURE 2 IN No. 553

BERLIN, *July 25, 1938*

*The Ambassador.*

I have read Mr. Strang's letter of 21st July to Your Excellency.

Mr. Strang recounts various items of recent evidence of a military nature which might suggest that Germany is deliberately preparing an attack on Czechoslovakia for this autumn.

Much of this evidence confirms the known fact that the German military machine is working at top speed to prepare itself for all eventualities and is making great efforts to ensure a state of very complete readiness. This has been my conviction all along, and war with Czechoslovakia is surely the most probable eventuality.

On the other hand I am continually coming across evidence that Germany as a whole is not ready for war this autumn, and does not want it. As far as the Army High Command is concerned I am convinced that they are definitely opposed to war. Unfortunately the decision does not rest with the Army, and I have continually stressed the fact that under certain circumstances Herr Hitler will almost certainly march against Czechoslovakia without warning.

But I am quite unconvinced that the military evidence now at our disposal definitely indicates a clear intention to march this autumn.

I see the situation as follows. Herr Hitler told his Service Chiefs very plainly last February that it was perfectly possible that circumstances might force him to take military action this year, and that everything possible was to be done to accelerate preparation for war in every respect. Then came the 'Anschluss' to handicap seriously the efforts of the Services, and this was followed by a period in which there seemed some prospects of at any rate a temporary solution to the Sudeten question being found by peaceful means.

Now, however, the prospects of a peaceful solution to the Sudeten question appear to be receding. We are at the same time approaching the danger period between the harvest and the end of the 'military year'. If Herr Hitler resorts to force he will almost certainly do so during this period.

Is it to be wondered at that short of actual mobilisation Herr Hitler's Service Chiefs are doing what they can in preparation for a possible call? There is undoubtedly evidence that both the Army and Air Force are rapidly making various preparations. Such evidence is obviously significant. But I do not think that we are yet justified in deducing intention.

We have to recognize the fact that Herr Hitler is given to taking his own line. His Generals know this as well as we do, and I shall be surprised if we secure any definite military evidence of Herr Hitler's intentions in advance.

At the moment we are faced by the fact that Herr Hitler cannot exclude the possibility that his hand may be forced for a variety of inner-political and foreign-political reasons. Should this come to pass he will obviously endeavour to secure the initiative. His armed forces are seeing to it that if the emergency arises their preparations shall not be found wanting.

F. N. MASON-MACFARLANE  
*Colonel, Military Attaché.*

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) and Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 302<sup>1</sup> Telegraphic [C 7706/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 28, 1938*

I would draw special attention to the following passage from my speech in the House of Lords yesterday.<sup>2</sup>

'I do not believe that those responsible for Government of any country in Europe today want war. Every Government must know great desire for peace among people of every nation, and every Government must reflect upon what would be consequences to all the fairest hopes they cherish for future of millions that are entrusted to their charge. His Majesty's Government believe that just and reasonable settlement is capable of attainment if problem is handled prudently, with spirit of restraint and spirit of accommodation on all sides. Here I should like to express a hope. I think that everyone will agree that it is only reasonable that Lord Runciman should be enabled to carry out his delicate mission in an atmosphere of calm and confidence. I trust, therefore, that all those concerned, both within and without frontiers of Czechoslovakia, will do all they can to help to create this atmosphere and thus assist Lord Runciman in difficult task that he is willing to undertake. Above all, if this work of mediation is to proceed smoothly and successfully, it is clear that the less there can be of recrimination or threats in Press or elsewhere, the better. Since we are pressing the Czechoslovak Government to be generous and conciliatory, we confidently count on Germany to give similar advice, where she may, with a view to avoiding a deadlock consequences of which might be incalculable.

'A problem which in one form or another has challenged solution for five hundred years cannot be suddenly resolved, and provided always that those who are seeking for a settlement are animated by sincere intentions, it cannot fairly be made cause of reproach that matters so closely affecting structure of the State should be handled with due precaution and, as far as may be, with assent of all concerned. Given such sincere and honest intentions, His Majesty's Government are anxious, as we have tried to prove, to lend any help within our power, and I feel bound to say plainly that public opinion in this country would quickly declare itself against any action which, whether by obstructing reasonable compromise or by rendering impossible its fair consideration, might imperil the settlement and jeopardise cause of European peace.'

Repeated to Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 302 to Berlin: No. 211 to Prague.

<sup>2</sup> Parl. Deb. 5th Ser., H. of L., vol. 110, cols. 1284-5.

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Campbell (Paris)*  
*No. 188 Saving: Telegraphic [C 7559/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, July 28, 1938

Prague telegram No. 407<sup>1</sup> and Berlin telegram No. 332.<sup>2</sup>

Please inform the French Government of the attitude of Herr Kundt and of the German Government. You should add that Lord Runciman will be arriving in Prague on Wednesday, August 3.

At the same time you should call M. Bonnet's attention to the passages in my speech of yesterday in the House of Lords as contained in my telegram to Prague No. 211.<sup>3</sup>

Repeated to Berlin and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 547.

<sup>2</sup> No. 552.

<sup>3</sup> No. 554. Mr. Campbell telegraphed on July 30 that M. Bonnet was unable to receive him before leaving Paris or until the evening of August 1. Mr. Campbell had therefore left an *aide-mémoire* with M. Bonnet's Chef de Cabinet and had asked for an appointment with M. Bonnet on August 2.

No. 556

*Letter from Viscount Halifax to Herr von Ribbentrop*  
*[C 7577/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, July 28, 1938

My dear Herr von Ribbentrop,

I have just received from Sir Nevile Henderson the message which you sent to him in response to the communication which I had instructed him to make to the German Government, explaining the circumstances in which Lord Runciman has undertaken the rôle of investigator and mediator in the negotiations at present proceeding between the Czechoslovak Government and the leaders of the Sudeten Party. I had asked Sir Nevile Henderson when making this communication to you to express the hope that the German Government would give Lord Runciman all the assistance they could in his difficult task, by advocating publicly and through the press patience and moderation in all circumstances. I am glad to see that the German press have given a not unfavourable reception to Lord Runciman's appointment, and I confidently hope that I may count upon Your Excellency's collaboration to ensure the maintenance of an atmosphere of calm and confidence which is essential for the success of Lord Runciman's mission.

I am very sorry that reports of Lord Runciman's appointment should have appeared in the press before Sir Nevile Henderson's communication reached you. These reports, I need hardly say, were not the result of any official announcement from here but were published without authority. I made a point of communicating with the German Government at the earliest

possible moment after I had heard from Prague that the Czechoslovak Government desired that an investigator and mediator should be appointed.

I was somewhat disappointed to learn from Sir Neville that you had expressed the view that the German Government must reserve its attitude and treat the matter as one of purely British concern. As our two Governments are united in desiring the peaceful solution of the Sudeten problem, I would venture to hope that the German Government will see their way to encourage and assist the present undertaking. You will no doubt have had the opportunity to read a speech I made in the House of Lords a few days ago, in which I tried to give my reasons for hoping that we were now adopting the best method of obtaining such an agreed solution, and avoiding really great dangers. But it goes without saying, as I pointed out in my speech, that the chances of success must largely depend upon the conditions and atmosphere in which this attempt is made, and the degree of official and public support that it can enlist.

It cannot be denied that the continued tension caused by the Czechoslovak problem is creating a state of uncertainty and nervousness throughout Europe, and if all concerned do not work together to reduce this tension it is no exaggeration to say that the peace of every one of the Great Powers of Europe may be endangered. If, on the other hand, this problem could be peacefully and equitably settled and normal relations thereby re-established between Germany and Czechoslovakia, we might confidently trust that the anxieties which at present weigh upon us might be relieved, and the way made clear for further constructive policies to the benefit of both our nations.

I am writing to you thus frankly and fully because, as we have more than once said to each other while you were in London, we both desire to see the relations between Great Britain and Germany established on a basis of mutual confidence and co-operation, and the present situation seems to me to give a great opportunity for doing something to realise the hope that we both entertain.

Yours very sincerely,  
HALIFAX

No. 557

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Campbell (Paris)*

*No. 1675 [C 7683/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, July 28, 1938

Sir,

In the course of our conversation this afternoon, the French Ambassador asked me whether there was any truth in the rumours of Captain Wiedemann paying a further visit to the Prime Minister on Saturday. I told him that neither I nor the Prime Minister had heard anything of it.

2. He then said that he had read what I had said in the House of Lords



last night on the subject of Italy,<sup>1</sup> which he thought would be useful. The silence that had descended on Signor Mussolini was very strange, and he thought it was all to the good that I should have made it plain that we were as sensitive about any suggestion about dividing London from Paris as he was about dividing Rome from Berlin.

3. Finally, his Excellency referred to Lord Runciman's mission to Czechoslovakia. He began by saying that the French Government were a little anxious lest in the course of his work there Lord Runciman should introduce new matter into the discussions which might be embarrassing. To this I replied that I thought one of the main objects of Lord Runciman going there was to make new suggestions on points that had hitherto proved intractable, and that I was, accordingly, rather puzzled by the French anxiety.

4. M. Corbin explained that the kind of thing they had in mind was that Lord Runciman might open up the large question of neutralisation, which might give rise to difficulties. On this I told M. Corbin that I had informed Lord Runciman of the general line of the suggestions in regard to Czechoslovak foreign policy that we had, some time ago, put to the French Government, but that his comment to me on this had been that he did not suppose anybody wished to raise the question of foreign policy if it could be avoided. With this M. Corbin seemed satisfied.

5. The other main question to which he was concerned to draw my attention was that the French Government should, as far as possible, be kept informed of the progress of Lord Runciman's discussions. They thought it might well be that on occasions they could give helpful advice to the Czechoslovak Government in the course of these discussions. It had, perhaps, been in part due to their advice that the hesitations of the Czechoslovak Government to invite Lord Runciman had been so readily and unconditionally overcome.

6. I said that I had already given instructions in the Department that the French Government should, of course, be kept fully informed, and that he could assure M. Bonnet in this sense. He agreed with me in thinking that, provided things went reasonably well and the general atmosphere could be kept calm, it was not unreasonable to expect a certain *détente* while Lord Runciman was beginning his task, and, as we hoped, assisting in the creation of an easier temper among those primarily concerned.

7. The Ambassador, however, agreed with me that we must cherish all these hopes with the constant mental reservation that they might all be proved baseless by this time to-morrow.

I am, &c.,  
HALIFAX

<sup>1</sup> Lord Halifax had expressed the regret of His Majesty's Government that the signature of the Anglo-Italian Agreement had not resulted in an improvement in Franco-Italian relations, and had refuted as 'mischievous' suggestions that the Agreement was designed to loosen the Rome-Berlin Axis. See Parl. Deb. 5th Ser., H. of L., vol. 110, cols. 1279-80.

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Mr. Strang*  
*[C 7651/65/18]*

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, July 28, 1938

Dear Strang,

I hear from a source which cannot be entirely disregarded that a movement is on foot among the forward section of the Nazi Party, including Ribbentrop, to stage some sort of test mobilisation on August 15th, ostensibly to take the place of the full scale manoeuvres which have been abandoned this year.

The purpose of this proposed mobilisation is not entirely clear but it would appear to be designed to satisfy those elements in the Party who feel that Hitler has allowed himself to be impudently defied by Benes and his miserable little nation far too long. This kind of sensitiveness is a well-known German trait and there is certainly a large body of opinion here which feels that for internal as well as external reasons the slap in the face of May 21st must be obliterated by some such demonstration. A demonstration is, I understand, all that it is intended to be and its promoters are hazy as to the immediate reaction which it would have on other countries. The Army leaders on the other hand are well aware of the dangers under present circumstances and are for this reason strongly opposed to the idea. At the same time they are under pressure because they are obliged to admit that the machine did not function entirely perfectly on March 11th. Meanwhile Hitler is said to have given no final decision and though he has hitherto stood out strongly against the idea he is believed to be yielding somewhat now. The decision is anyway to be made this week.

According to my informant a number of people know of the scheme and a considerable controversy is going on about it. Nevertheless those concerned have been feverishly pushing on the requisite preparations in case the decision should be taken. This may also partly explain the promulgation of the 'Wehrleistungsgesetz' (see my telegram No. 341 Saving<sup>1</sup>) which is of course designed for just such an eventuality.

As I have already indicated the whole thing may be a mare's nest or, what is more likely, its scope may have been greatly exaggerated.

My Military Attaché has heard rumours in several quarters that in some of the areas in which manoeuvres on a small scale are to be held this autumn the process of mobilisation is to be carried out with considerable thoroughness. It is said that even the civil jobs of reservists called up for manoeuvres will be filled by those who would have to take them on in war.

It is understood that manoeuvres will be held for certain in East Prussia and Silesia.

The possible foreign repercussions to mobilisation in Silesia are obvious, and although our information is as yet somewhat vague I feel that we must

<sup>1</sup> No. 509 in Volume I of this Series.

watch for further indications most carefully and be prepared in advance to take steps to discourage anything like a test mobilisation in frontier areas should we obtain more definite evidence of the intention.

Since writing the above an article has appeared in the 'Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung' which has some bearing on the question and I enclose a copy of a minute by the Military Attaché with reference to it.

Yrs. ever,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

ENCLOSURE IN No. 558

BERLIN, July 28, 1938

*The Ambassador.*

The 'D.A.Z.' of 27 July (evening edition) contains an article on Divisional and Reserve Training. It is clearly officially inspired.

2. It points out that this year large combined manoeuvres of the scope of those carried out last year will not take place. Manoeuvres of this type will in future be carried out every three years, so that they will next be held in 1940. There are various reasons for this but one of the main ones is expense.

3. This year manoeuvres will consist almost entirely of Exercises within the Divisions. It is explained that as Exercises on a larger scale will not be taking place, there will be opportunity for the formation and training of Reserve Formations. It is also stated that in order to avoid dislocation of normal civil affairs the training of the different Formations to be formed will be spread over a considerable period. There has already been at least one case this summer of an entire Reserve Infantry Regiment having been assembled and trained.

4. From information previously received from the German War Office I gather that there will be at least two exceptions to the intention to confine Exercises to the scope of Divisional Training. Both in the Ist and VIIIth Army Corps areas the exercises will be on a Corps scale and one Division will be pitted against another.

5. I think that the main object of this article is to make it clear both in Germany and abroad that it is intended to embody a considerable number of Reserve Formations for training purposes. Such action might well give rise to the suspicion that mobilisation was taking place, and it will of necessity entail various measures which must be part and parcel of mobilisation arrangements. Without some such warning as above this action might easily be misconstrued.

6. The information given in this article is of particular interest in view of the rumours of test mobilisation which we have received and which Your Excellency has reported in your despatch of today's date. It may even be an explanation of them.

F. N. MASON-MACFARLANE  
Colonel, Military Attaché.

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)**No. 212 Telegraphic [C 7764/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, July 29, 1938, 6.0 p.m.

1. It has been represented to us by persons who are in contact with Herr Henlein that it would do much to relieve the existing tension if the Czechoslovak Government could immediately adopt certain measures which it is within their power to put through at once, and that if such action were to synchronise with the arrival of Lord Runciman, it would tend to convince the minorities that a new attitude of mind has begun to prevail.

2. The measures suggested are:—

- (a) a beginning of the exchange of Sudeten and Czech officials, with the object of gradually transferring them to their respective racial territories;
- (b) the introduction into the Czechoslovak press, especially the newspapers of the frontier areas, of a spirit of conciliation;
- (c) disarmament of the various Czech political organizations;
- (d) the gradual withdrawal of the much increased number of State and secret police from the Sudeten districts and their replacement in towns and open districts by the old Stadtpolizei (uniformed municipal police);
- (e) Government approval of the mayors elected some weeks ago in the Sudeten areas.

3. I agree that it would create the best impression if the Czechoslovak Government could immediately put in hand some at any rate of these measures, and that this would give Lord Runciman's mission an auspicious start.

4. I should be glad if you would consider whether there is anything you can usefully say to the President of the Council on these lines, and unless you see serious objection I should be glad if you would press the point upon him so far as you think it proper to do so.

Repeated to Paris, Berlin, Warsaw and Budapest.

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 30, 2.15 p.m.)**No. 335 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 7753/42/18]*

BERLIN, July 30, 1938

I met State Secretary and Dr. Schacht at lunch yesterday. The latter who a year ago was insistent that autonomous rights for Sudeten afforded facile solution of Czechoslovak problem, is now equally insistent that nothing but incorporation in the Reich can serve any purpose. When I disputed this Dr. Schacht's attitude was that he was merely speaking his own opinion since he was absolutely out of all politics.

I told him I regretted this since apart from his views about the Sudeten I thought his advice might be salutary. He replied that the Chancellor nowadays listened to nobody's advice and Germany was at the mercy of pathological (*sic*)<sup>1</sup> individuals.

While Dr. Schacht may have had in mind his own financial difficulties, I have the impression of growing uneasiness in moderate circles here. Attitude adopted by press here towards 'bombs to Berlin' incident in the House of Commons on July 27 (see my telegram No. 352 Saving<sup>2</sup>) was disquieting and I suspect extremist party of increasing impatience and activity. I hear for instance that announcement of Runciman mission caused it great dissatisfaction. Attitude of Minister for Foreign Affairs in this respect (see my telegram No. 332<sup>3</sup>) was also symptomatic.

On receipt of 'Times' version of Mr. Montague's interruption I at once forwarded extract from that paper to State Secretary and protested against unfair and ill-advised publicity given to it in German press. I pointed out that it would have been more useful to draw attention to your recommendation (text of which I also sent to him) on the same day in the House of Lords for calmness of atmosphere and restraint in Czech-Sudeten negotiations. I added that I found the press agitation in this case at variance with Herr Hitler's views as indicated to you by Captain Wiedemann and I expressed the hope that State Secretary would convey the true version of the affair to the Chancellor himself.

State Secretary discussed this communication with me at lunch yesterday. He obviously personally shared my opinion and asked me what he should do about it. I replied 'Send it to Bayreuth' (where the Chancellor now is). He said 'I can only do so through my Minister'. 'Will it then', I asked, 'get any further?' His answer was 'I must be loyal to my chief', a sentiment in which I outwardly fully concurred, but which inwardly I feared in this particular case would be scarcely likely to be helpful.

Both State Secretary and Dr. Schacht took the view that despatch of Lord Runciman involved a heavy responsibility for His Majesty's Government. I denied this utterly, stressing his complete independence. Nevertheless this is the standpoint which will be widely held, however much it is denied, particularly in view of officials attached to his staff.

It seems to me more than ever important today to strengthen the Chancellor's hands against his extremists though I am unable to offer any suggestion how this can be done except by avoidance where possible in British press of polemics calculated to provoke his resentment.

<sup>1</sup> This *sic* is in the file copy of the telegram.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. This telegram referred to a concerted outcry in the German press with regard to a question in the House of Commons arising out of a discussion of air-liners. Mr. Montague, who had interpolated a supplementary question on the possibility of using passenger aeroplanes for conveying bombs, stated later in the proceedings of the House that his question was concerned entirely with the technical matters under discussion. See Parl. Deb. 5th Ser., H. of C., vol. 338, cols. 3100-1.

<sup>3</sup> No. 552.

*Mr. Shone (Bled)*<sup>1</sup> to *Viscount Halifax (Received July 31, 10.0 a.m.)*  
*No. 1 Telegraphic [C 7745/1941/18]*

BLD, July 30, 1938, 5.15 p.m.

Just after my arrival here this morning I was sent for by Minister of Court who said that in absence of President of the Council he had an important communication to make to me in strictest confidence regarding attitude of President of Czechoslovakia in negotiations between Czechoslovak Government and Sudeten Germans. M. Antitch believed that Mr. Newton had just left Prague for London otherwise the Yugoslav Minister at Prague would have been instructed to make communication to him.

The Yugoslav Government, said M. Antitch, had learned from what they believed to be an absolutely sure source that M. Benes was bent on spinning out negotiations in hope that if he could prolong them beyond August and September and especially until after Nazi Party Congress at Nuremberg the dangers inherent in situation would be less than at present and a solution of problem possible on terms less onerous for Czechoslovak Government. M. Benes, according to Yugoslav Government's information, did not expect much from Lord Runciman's mission and he was determined to use every device he could to gain time with a view to avoiding presentation of definite proposals to Czechoslovak Parliament until after period which he regarded as particularly dangerous was explored (*sic*, ? expired).<sup>2</sup> The Yugoslav Government wished me to inform you of foregoing as position of His Majesty's Government with regard to Czechoslovak problem was different from that of any other, and their sole purpose in doing so was to serve cause of peace.

I asked M. Antitch whether he was making any communication with French Government or to any of Yugoslavia's special friends, and he replied only to His Majesty's Government who he felt sure would respect the confidence in which Yugoslav Government were disclosing information concerning head of a State in Treaty relations with them.<sup>3</sup>

Repeated Belgrade only.

<sup>1</sup> The Prince Regent of Yugoslavia had taken up his summer residence at Bled.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>3</sup> In a later telegram of July 30, Mr. Shone stated (i) that M. Antitch did not believe that the Germans were contemplating an attack on Czechoslovakia, but that the danger was rather an incident in Sudeten territory resulting from incitement or provocation, (ii) that, according to M. Antitch, Dr. Benes was claiming that Lord Halifax was 'in accord with his (Dr. Benes') policy of delaying the matter'.

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 1, 3.45 p.m.)*  
*No. 337 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 7754/65/18]*

BERLIN, August 1, 1938

The 'Deutsche Nachrichten Bureau' issued on July 30 the following communiqué, which is published in all newspapers, foreshadowing a decree, the effect of which is to bar practically the entire western frontier area to members of all foreign military, naval and air forces.

'Circumstances make it desirable to refer to the fact that according to the passport law of 1867 German Nationals and foreigners are obliged at any time to identify themselves satisfactorily upon official request. German Nationals over 15 years of age can comply with this obligation by showing any valid official identity card with a photograph, and they are otherwise in danger of arrest until their identity can be established. For foreigners the obligation to identify themselves has been extended by the passport decree of 1919 which makes it obligatory for them to carry passports, that is to say all foreigners staying in Germany, unless they wish to make themselves liable to punishment under the passport order of 1923, must carry a valid passport of their country of origin or a substitute passport recognized by German law. These provisions are to be especially observed by persons travelling from the remainder of German territory into the prohibited area in the west of the Reich. The prohibited area in the west of Reich includes the entire area on the left bank of the Rhine; the province of Baden with the exception of the districts (Amtsbezirke) of Tauberbischofsheim; Buchen, Adelsheim, Messkirch, Pfullendorff, Ueberlingen and in addition, in Prussia the communes (Kreise) of Hanau and Gelnhausen as well as the commune of Hechingen (Hohenzollern), in Hesse the communes of Offenbach (Main), Darmstadt, Gross-Gerau, Dieburg, Bensheim, Heppenheim, Erbach, Büdingen, Schotten; in Bavaria the districts (Bezirke) Aschaffenburg, Alzenau, Obernberg, Miltenberg and Marktheidenfeld, and in Württemberg the communes of Neckarsulm, Heilbronn, Brackenheim, Maulbronn, Besigheim, Marbach and Vaihingen, (Enz), Ludwigsburg, Stuttgart, Leonberg, Böblingen, Calw, Nagold, Freudenstadt, Horb, Sulz, Oberndorf, Rottweil.

'In the "Reichsgesetzblatt", Part I, there will shortly appear a decree with regard to the prohibition of the sojourn of active members of foreign armed forces in prohibited areas. According to this decree, the sojourn for all active members of foreign armed forces in prohibited areas is forbidden. The decree contains precise information as to the areas affected. The decree enters into force immediately on publication in the "Reichsgesetzblatt". According thereto all active members of foreign armed forces who at the time are staying in prohibited areas must leave those areas at once. If, after the entry into force of the decree, they are found in prohibited areas, they run the risk of punishment.'

No. 563

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 1, 5.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 338 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 7755/65/18]*

BERLIN, August 1, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

Military Attaché enquired this morning at German War Office regarding yesterday's notice in the press announcing prohibited areas in which serving officers of foreign armies are not to be allowed. He was informed that they were roughly as follows: All the left bank of the Rhine. An area about 100 kilometres wide on the right bank of Rhine south of the River Main to Swiss Frontier. An area about 40 kilometres wide along the Bavarian-Czech Frontier from about Hof to Cham. Practically all Germany between the Oder and the Polish Frontier. 'Reichsgesetzblatt' is issuing immediately, and act comes into force on 3rd or 4th of August. Military Attaché was requested to ask all British officers on leave in these areas to leave them at once. He was informed that a map giving the exact limits of the areas and further details would be given him as soon as possible. This map will show through roads which may be used at all times when travelling. Railway travel will be unrestricted. Foreign officers attached to the German army will be permitted in these areas only in uniform.

Military Attaché is telephoning War Office and taking steps regarding officers on leave.

<sup>1</sup> No. 562.

No. 564

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 1, 7.40 p.m.)*  
*No. 340 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 7809/65/18]*

BERLIN, August 1, 1938

I asked Military Attaché to enquire at German War Office this morning about German intentions regarding calling up and training of reservists this year. He was informed that in the case of about seven or eight divisions—mostly in different corps—divisions would be made up to war strength in September: in most cases process would commence about September 8. In every case division would be concentrated for [*sic*] or near a training area and would hold divisional exercises (only in East Prussia will 1st Corps carry out corps manoeuvres with 1st and 11th Divisions). A similar process is to be carried out throughout 5th Army Group in Austria. It was explained that it was the intention of High Command to test functioning of their machinery for raising divisions to a war footing, and to try out various alterations which had been introduced since they last had a test in Bavaria. Austria was to be subjected to complete test as it was desired to gain experience of how far it had been possible to bring Austria into line. It was anticipated that results in Austria would show up a 'Sauhaufen' (thoroughly bad show).. Military



Attaché was categorically told that nothing would start in August and that many troops would be (? absent)<sup>1</sup> for bulk of August on harvest leave. It was moreover intended to keep on these men for an extra four weeks after their normal date of discharge on October 1. The reason given was that their services would be required to increase numbers of men available for instruction and demonstration purposes when new class recruits join up.

Military Attaché could not definitely discover whether class formations would be embodied in areas concerned or whether what amounts to test mobilization of the only active formations was involved.

Please inform War Office.

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.

No. 565

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 1, 10.30 p.m.)*  
*No. 415 Telegraphic [C 7788/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 1, 1938, 7.45 p.m.

Your telegram No. 212.<sup>1</sup>

I received not long ago suggestions (a) and (b) in second paragraph from what I imagine is the same source and replied that I was not greatly impressed by (a) and was already doing everything in my power in regard to (b).

To take points one by one:

(a). It would clearly be impossible for actual exchanges to take place by the time of Lord Runciman's arrival and mere announcement that such exchanges were about to be introduced would no doubt be described on the German side as window dressing.

(b). This point had been continually impressed upon the President and Czechoslovak Government both by myself and by my French colleague. For my latest representation see my telegram No. 404.<sup>2</sup>

(c). Government would certainly deny that any Czech political organizations are armed nor could I point to any evidence to the contrary.

(d). This is one of the matters to be negotiated and it seems unreasonable to expect the Government to start withdrawing State police in advance of negotiations, as regards a special aspect which your informant may have had in mind please see my telegram No. 388.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No. 559.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. In this telegram of July 26 Mr. Newton reported that on July 25 he had drawn the attention of the President of the Council to the activities in the local Czech press of Czech frontier organizations, in particular to a manifesto expressing strong views and signed by over thirty such organizations, which had appeared in 'Hranicar', a North Bohemian paper.

<sup>3</sup> Not printed. In this telegram of July 21 Mr. Newton reported that Dr. Hodza had explained that four or five new police stations were being set up in pursuance of the existing law, but that he had given the Sudeten representatives an assurance that no more would be set up. This assurance had been misinterpreted by them, and also immediately published in spite of the proviso that it should be treated as confidential until discussions on the whole police question were finished.

(e). I would refer to my telegram No. 287 Saving<sup>4</sup> of July 7. I understand that since that date confirmations have been steadily proceeding and that complaint has less substance today than it had a month ago.

I would further submit following general observations. Sudeten German party are in direct touch with Government and can easily submit such points themselves. Hitherto we have been careful to refrain as far as possible from intervening in details of dispute. Secondly, idea underlying the whole suggestion is that Government should make a gesture. No corresponding gesture is suggested from the other side and when Government have made gestures in forbearance they have received for them no credit and still less any gratitude. This point was made the other day somewhat bitterly by the President to my Italian colleague on the occasion of the latter's farewell visit when Dr. Benes cited such concrete and far-reaching acts of conciliation as amnesty, the granting of communal elections and the suppression of emigré press. I fear that his complaint was justified—see in fact last sentence of my telegram No. 193.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless I will of course continue to take any suitable opportunity to impress upon the President of the Council or in other quarters necessity of doing everything possible to promote a spirit of conciliation and collaboration. I doubt however whether a formal *démarche* would in the circumstances be appropriate. Although Lord Runciman's mission may not have been quite easy to swallow it has been given a good press and without further prompting from outside, Government will now want to do what they properly can to receive full benefit for their body politic of such an unusual remedy.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>4</sup> Not printed. In this telegram of July 7 Mr. Newton reported that Sudeten complaints of delay in confirming the new mayors in office were, in the opinion of H.M. Consul at Liberec, little justified, since the procedure of confirmation normally took some months, and about 10,000 mayors (of communes) had recently been elected.

<sup>5</sup> Not printed. In this telegram of May 25 Mr. Newton pointed out that 'such concessions as have already been made, namely the amnesty and holding of elections, far from being received with gratitude, have merely led to increasing agitation'.

#### No. 566

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 4)*

*No. 273 [C 7882/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 2, 1938

His Majesty's Minister at Prague presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit to him despatch No. 32 from His Majesty's consul, Liberec, dated the 2nd August, respecting the trend of opinion among Sudeten Germans.

*Consul Pares to Mr. Newton*

(No. 32.)

LIBREC, August 2, 1938

Sir,

I have the honour to report that the development of opinion among Sudeten Germans in recent weeks has, so far as I have been able to observe, tended towards moderation. Following on the events of the 21st May, which dashed their hopes and produced a feeling of great disappointment, there seems to have been a wave of irritation which, as the progress of the negotiations between the Government and the Henlein party became slower and slower whilst the Reich continued to lend no more than moral support to them through its radio propaganda, &c., subsided into a feeling of hopelessness. It is my belief that at present the average Sudeten German is prepared to accept very much less than he hoped to obtain in the past, partly because the extreme obstinacy of the Czechs and their unwillingness to make concessions have been demonstrated to him anew and partly because he is no longer so sure of the ability of the Reich to force an issue in the face of the other Powers' opposition. It is hard to judge whether this is also the view of the leaders of the party, but I have been informed that they are very pessimistic and expect to get far less than they thought possible three months ago. My informant was the director of the Librec branch of the Böhmisches Union Bank, and stands in close contact with the most important manufacturers of this neighbourhood, who, no doubt, themselves know something of what is going on in the Henlein party's headquarters.

2. But there are certain concessions which the average man regards as indispensable. Some quotations from a recent leading article of the 'Gablonzer Tagblatt' may be of interest to you in this connexion. It is an independent newspaper and is considered as 'national' in tone. It may be taken as representing fairly accurately the views of that section of the local population which is not active in politics and is therefore not prone to adopt the uncompromising tone affected by the official journals of the party. After blaming the Czech press for its total rejection of the Sudeten German party's memorandum in spite of the fact that some at least of its proposals have already been accepted by the Government for discussion, the article proceeds to describe the memorandum as 'nothing more than a protective law ("Schutzgesetz") intended to preserve the Sudeten German against further denationalisation and against the chauvinist policy of the Czechs which aims at pushing forward the national boundary to the State boundary in the course of time. . . . The memorandum contains no mention of territorial autonomy, but only of self-administration. . . . The former phrase, translated into German, means nothing else but legislative independence ("Eigengesetzlichkeit").' The article adds to this that 'the status of the British dominions and of Hungary before the war are instances of autonomy. Independent control of finance does not appear to be claimed in the memorandum. . . . The Sudeten Ger-

mans demand no legislative powers, but only that German officials and national administrative bodies shall administer the laws. It would be a bad solution if newly appointed State officials were systematically transferred to Czech districts. Promises don't help us when they are not equipped with guarantees for their observance. It is not surprising that the Sudeten German party has demanded guarantees that are as effective as possible. . . . The memorandum had to analyse the organisation of all State offices and institutions with the view of ascertaining where safeguards for us should be incorporated. . . . The claim that the chairman of the proposed self-governing German bodies must be a member of the Government is natural. One need only call to mind the "Landsmannministers" in pre-war Austria.' (This point is interesting since it shows that the somewhat startling proposal of the Henlein party is not so monstrous or novel as it may seem.) I think that what I have quoted is sufficient to indicate an attitude which is both moderate and understandable, and think I may safely say that it is one which is very common. The two fundamental claims of the Sudeten Germans—the right to have German districts administered by German officials and the establishment of adequate guarantees against the encroachment of the Czech nation on the areas settled by Sudeten Germans—are reasserted. The article closes with the statement that 'the spirit of the memorandum and not the letter is important' and that 'terms, ideas and forms can perhaps be modified'.

3. The position of the former activist parties in the Sudeten German party is a question of considerable interest and I recently discussed it with the former leader of the Liberec association of Christian Socialists, who is now a member of the 'Ortsleitung' of the Sudeten German party. He admitted that the former activists had not succeeded in influencing the policies of the Henlein party to any appreciable degree and said that in Liberec the former Christian Socialists received what was in their opinion a rather ungenerous allotment of seats in the newly elected town administration. Efforts were indeed being made to create a new Christian Socialist party, but they were not likely to meet with any success for the present. The adhesion of the former Christian Socialists to the Sudeten German party in April was necessary in his opinion to avoid a national cleavage, but later on, if the position of the Sudeten Germans in the Czechoslovak State should become tolerable and assured, the old party would probably be revived.

4. His description of the circumstances leading to the merging of the Christian Socialists in the Henlein party was interesting. As long ago as last autumn an agreement was reached between the two parties and it was conceded that both were working in the interests of the Sudeten Germans as a whole; but the one was to acquire merit with the Czechs by co-operating with the Government whilst the other was to bring pressure to bear from outside by making a fuss ('brüllen'). But the 'Anschluss' altered the state of affairs and by creating a tremendous movement towards unity enabled the Henlein party to dictate its own terms to the nationally-minded (as opposed to the 'Marxist') activists. This account makes it evident that the former Christian Socialists do not necessarily regard their association with the

Sudeten German party as lasting. My acquaintance mentioned a point which I have already touched on in a previous report—namely, that for very many Christian Socialists the creed of National Socialism is repugnant and that it cannot be adopted in a day along with membership of the Henlein party.

5. Nevertheless, 90 per cent. of the Sudeten Germans would, in the opinion of this acquaintance, vote in favour of an 'Anschluss' if a plebiscite were held, even those persons who dislike the present régime in Germany. It is a little difficult to reconcile this assertion with the foregoing paragraphs, but the explanation seems to be as follows: Though the Christian Socialists are as loyal Germans as any others, they disapprove of a policy which, in their opinion, might lead to a catastrophic war. They are apparently not convinced that the policy of the leaders of the Henlein party is very wise, but for the moment have to accept the bad with the good.

6. According to several newspaper reports, the membership of the Christian Socialist trade unions is now increasing, largely at the expense of the Social Democrats. The Christian Socialist unions have maintained their separate existence, but work together with the unions under the control of the Henlein party in elections to the workers' factory councils, &c. It is a good sign that they are now able to increase the number of their members.

7. My acquaintance informed me that the district headquarters of the Sudeten German party here is recommending moderation to its supporters. He assured me that the Bezirksleiter, Herr Porsche, frequently reminds his subordinates that the policy of the party is constitutional. It is, of course, possible that this policy does not correspond to Herr Porsche's own sympathies, but it is, none the less, interesting that the phrase 'wir stehen auf dem Boden des Staates' is used not only in parliamentary debates and election speeches, but also in the domestic councils of the party. I have learned that two high officials in the local branch, who hold extreme views, have recently been relieved of their offices.

8. The organisation known as 'Freiwilliger Schutzdienst' (F.S.) is still being built up and, according to Czech newspaper reports, drilled. It will certainly provide an organised corps which would be useful to the Reich in the event of war, but it is probably not yet armed.

9. It is difficult to reconcile these contradictory activities in the Sudeten German party with one another. No doubt some of the extremists have to be given their head a little to keep them in a good humour. One may compare the Sudeten German party to a circus performer guiding three horses at the same time and jumping nimbly from the back of one to another. It is hard to guess what will be the ultimate development.

10. Now and then evidence comes to hand showing that the Czechs have not wholly given up the policies which have caused so much irritation among the Germans. For instance, the newspapers report that the newly appointed stationmaster of Schluckenau, a fairly large town in this neighbourhood, is a Czech and the new traffic manager at Liberec station is also a Czech. On the other hand, I learn from a member of the Henlein party

that a local policeman who refused to answer enquiries in German (though he was well able to do so) has been fined 100 crowns by the police chief. The fine amounts to about one-eighth of his monthly salary and will certainly deter the other policemen in the future from similar bad behaviour.

I have, &c.,  
P. PARES

No. 567

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 4)*

*No. 276 [C 7885/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 2, 1938

My Lord,

It may be useful on the eve of Lord Runciman's arrival to submit some impressions of the state of Czech public opinion at the present juncture. It is a matter on which it is impossible to dogmatise, for there is little concrete on which to base an opinion. Nevertheless, certain tentative conclusions may be reached as a result of general observation and of conversations with persons in various walks of life.

2. In his despatch No. 45<sup>1</sup> of the 22nd February, Mr. Troutbeck stated that while the Czechs had been reckoning with the possible collapse of Austrian independence, yet, when the blow fell, it came to them as a real shock. Since then the Czech public has been subjected to a continued series of shocks, for, having basked for years in the sunshine of the Benes optimism, it had failed to appreciate, in its heart if not in its head, how the rise of Hitler Germany had completely transformed the position of this country and destroyed the dream of gradually assimilating the Sudeten Germans into the Czech mould. The Government were, of course, quicker to realise the necessities of the situation than was the general public, but, having created the 'Czech myth' and fed the public upon it for so many years, they were unable, or unwilling, to undertake the complete *volte-face* which the new state of affairs demanded. A few concessions were 'octroyed' [*sic*] in the so-called agreement with the Activists of February 1937, but these would have been hopelessly inadequate to hold back the rising tide of Sudeten German racialism even if they had been carried out. The fact that they were not carried out merely assisted in the creation of a kind of tidal wave, which would probably have proved irresistible in any case, but has certainly become so since the 'Anschluss'.

3. Since then the country has been living in a state of permanent crisis, and the Government, exposed on the one side to the full blast of German threats and propaganda and at the same time prodded from behind by 'friendly advice' from Great Britain and France, have been feverishly endeavouring to work out a plan of reform which, if it would not satisfy the

<sup>1</sup> This despatch referred to the Berchtesgaden agreement, which, Mr. Troutbeck reported, was regarded by Czech opinion as marking the end of Austrian independence.

insatiable appetite of the minorities, would at least be sufficient to show the Western Powers that everything had been done that could reasonably be demanded without seriously weakening the capacity of the State to resist the German menace.

4. While the pressure from the Reich and the attitude of the Sudeten Germans have naturally angered the Czech public, so that hatred of the German is probably more intense to-day than at any time in the past, the pressure from the friendly Powers has tended to bewilder it. There is a feeling, fostered by long years of propaganda, that such pressure is unfair, that no people has treated its minorities so well as the Czechs and that the whole question is being regarded not from the objective standpoint of what is right and proper for a minority, but from the subjective standpoint of how the Western Powers can save their own skins at the expense of the Czechs. There was, indeed, a moment after the 21st May when the Czechs felt that when it came to the point they did have Great Britain and France behind them, and their self-confidence was renewed by the Sokol Congress. Since then, however, bewilderment has returned as a result of the Runciman mission, and the bewilderment is increased by certain resentment and suspicion. As an example of the more extreme feeling in the Czech frontier population I would draw your attention to the article enclosed herein from a leading Czech frontier newspaper in North Bohemia.<sup>2</sup>

5. The resentment is, however, not directed only against Great Britain as the author of this novel proposition; it falls also upon the leaders of the country who are thought to be responsible for having landed it in its present undignified and dangerous position. Hitherto the Government have successfully prevented all open criticism by a severe censorship of the press and by a prohibition of public meetings. Criticism, therefore, is confined to grumblings in coffee-houses and university common-rooms and in such form is probably not dangerous. There is no public platform which a disgruntled leader could use. For this reason the Government are likely to remain master of the situation so long as they themselves remain united. But the possibility cannot be excluded of a split in the Government ranks should the concessions demanded go too far. I referred in my telegram No. 344<sup>3</sup> of the 14th July to reports of a highly charged Cabinet meeting on the 12th July, and to-day's press contains a significant statement that the provincial executive committee of the Christian Socialist party held a meeting yesterday at which 'certain responsible personalities' were condemned for having allowed the situation to come to its present pass. The leading light in the Christian Socialist party is Dr. Sramek, who is one of the Old Guard of Czech nationalists who created the State, and he has been the most obstinate member of the whole Cabinet in resistance to concessions. If he decided to break away and lead a policy of resistance, he might rally to his side the whole of the hitherto leaderless opinion which has been impotently grumbling in the background.

6. Feeling in military circles is, of course, a matter of importance in the present situation. As to this the Military Attaché is of opinion that the army,

<sup>2</sup> Not printed.

<sup>3</sup> No. 484 in Volume I of this Series.

while considering the present policy of concessions to the Sudeten Germans quite unnecessary, is nevertheless still loyal to the Government and prides itself on being free of political influence. On the other hand, every officer he meets is firmly convinced that war is inevitable—not, indeed, this year, for it is believed that Hitler is not ready for it, but next year or the year after. For this reason it may be expected that military opinion would have a strong word to say if it believed that the Government were preparing to offer concessions which would compromise the military security of the State.

7. My general conclusion is that, while both civil and military opinion is as yet behind the Government, and ready, grudgingly, to accept the concessions proposed so long as those are held to be compatible with the integrity of the State, on the other hand, should the Government endeavour to go too far there would be a serious danger of a split in their ranks as well as of a military resistance. Where the danger point would be reached I should hesitate to predict, but I believe that it would be reached should the Government accept a demand for a plebiscite and that it might be reached should they accept any proposal for territorial autonomy or a Sudeten German Volkstag. On the other hand, Lord Runciman's influence and recommendations will certainly carry great weight both for their own sake and for the effect they are bound to have on foreign opinion.

8. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassadors in Paris and Berlin.

I have, &c.,  
B. C. NEWTON

No. 568

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Mr. Strang*  
[C 7876/1941/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, August 2, 1938

Your letter<sup>1</sup> of 30th July setting forth Secretary of State's objections to Four Power Conference to deal with Czechoslovakia.

I mentioned the Four Powers only as a possible alternative in event of the Runciman mission leading to no result or in event of Benes' refusing a mediator altogether. Latter contingency has not arisen and I hope former will not either, though the job of reconciling the two points of view, Czech and Sudeten, is so difficult that the chance of its happening must remain a grave preoccupation.

As I see the situation it is as follows: the Sudeten demand self-governing territorial areas according to race. The Czechs object to this on the ground that such an arrangement would amount to virtual immediate partition which in time would lead to ultimate disruption. They propose instead mixed provinces (in which the Sudeten would never be in the majority) and limited autonomy in communes and districts.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. See No. 532, note 3, in Volume I of this Series.



However much one may sympathize with Czech apprehensions, their counterproposal in fact amounts merely to a new and complicated minority statute, which in no way satisfies the Sudeten demand for a State of Nationalities as opposed to a National State. It is thus a conflict not of detail but of principle and I am sorry to admit that I personally fear that it will prove impossible to find a compromise.

It is only at that stage that I contemplate the possibility of a Four Power Conference. There would be no question then of stiffening the German attitude; Italy would be coming in of her own volition solely to reduce its stiffness and to avoid war. In the middle of a crisis, there might be no time to invite Russia's participation or Poland's, nor have either of those Powers any responsibility in the creation of Czechoslovakia.

Let me quote an example of what I mean. The stages of a deadlock are the following:—

- (a) Both parties refuse to abandon their *principles*.
- (b) The Sudeten break off negotiations.
- (c) Germany starts mobilising on the ground of the protection of their Sudeten kinsfolk, who have organised a general strike or are in actual revolt.
- (d) France also begins mobilising.

At (b) or more probably (c) or (d) Italy as the friend of Germany proposes to Great Britain as friend of France to offer Anglo-Italian mediation.

That is the Four Power Conference I mean. It will constitute a last resort and the question of other participants should not be allowed to arise.

Yrs. ever,  
NEVILLE HENDERSON

#### No. 569

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 3)*  
*No. 416 Telegraphic [C 7873/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 3, 1938

The President sent for me shortly before Lord Runciman's arrival today to say that he wished Lord Runciman to feel that he had complete liberty, and that without embarrassing him with attentions or suggestions unless they were likely to be welcome, he desired him to know that all facilities were at his disposal; similar messages have been given to me in person by the President of the Council and Minister for Foreign Affairs.

President Benes went on to say that he would be glad to see Lord Runciman at all times either privately or officially as might be desired according to circumstances. He himself would always speak freely and openly and wanted Lord Runciman to do the same in their conversations. Should difficulties or misunderstandings arise in the course of the Mission and of negotiations, Dr. Benes would always be ready to give any personal help in his power.

Repeated to Berlin.

No. 570

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 3)*  
*No. 417 Telegraphic [C 7874/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 3, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

I took the opportunity of this audience to say that you had drawn my especial attention to your speech in the House of Lords on July 27th in the course of which you had expressed the hope that all concerned, both within and without Czechoslovakia, would do all they could to help to create an atmosphere of maintenance of calm and confidence. So far as the Czechoslovak Government were concerned I myself had no doubt that everything possible would be done to fulfil your hope and to create a spirit of conciliation and collaboration. Press too had given a good welcome to Lord Runciman but on occasions it was still not very helpful, more particularly in the case of local frontier press. This press might be in itself insignificant but unfortunately it circulates precisely in the Sudeten areas where much attention was paid to it. As Dr. Benes seemed receptive I left with him a reference to the article referred to in my despatch No. 276.<sup>2</sup>

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 569.

<sup>2</sup> No. 567.

No. 571

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 4)*  
*No. 418 Telegraphic [C 7889/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 3, 1938

President Benes told me today for your confidential information that he had given an audience on July 27 to German Minister.

2. During the recent farewell audience of the Italian Minister M. Facendis had expressed personal opinion that Germany would probably desire settlement with Czechoslovakia if minorities question could be solved. At the same time he had suggested that it would be a good thing if President could receive German Minister whom he had not seen since 'Anschluss'. President had replied that he would be glad to see Dr. Eisenlohr and suggested that he might apply early following week. Dr. Eisenlohr had asked the next Monday for an audience which took place two days later.

3. German Minister had said that the situation between Prague and Berlin was very tense and was likely either to get worse and worse or to improve, the latter perhaps as a result of Sudeten negotiations. Dr. Eisenlohr had expressed the opinion moreover that negotiations would not lead either to a rupture or to dead end. Dr. Benes had agreed with these views and assured Dr. Eisenlohr that it was contrary to his policy to let negotiations get

stranded. The propaganda from Germany was however a difficulty and if the German Government could show their desire for better relations, negotiations would be favourably influenced. Dr. Eisenlohr replied that main obstacle was mistrust on both sides. Berlin did not believe Prague was sincere and Prague feared that Germany was only waiting for the first convenient opportunity to swallow her up. Dr. Benes observed that fears of Prague were natural since a small country had more reason for anxiety than a big one. If therefore German Government really desired better relations they could assist by modifying the attitude of their spokesmen and of German press. He himself had made many gestures at different times and never received a response. The Czechoslovak people were therefore anxious.

4. In conclusion President Benes had assured the German Minister that he sincerely wished for better relations and asked for message to this effect to be conveyed to the German Government. Equally he wished for an improvement of relations with Sudeten Germans. Dr. Benes had furthermore suggested that a settlement between Prague and Berlin could be conveniently confined within some general settlement, such as that desired by Mr. Chamberlain. There had not been any reply so far.

Repeated to Berlin and Rome. Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

#### No. 572

*Mr. Campbell (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 4)*

*No. 495 Saving: Telegraphic [C 7901/1941/18]*

PARIS, August 3, 1938

My telegram No. 205.<sup>1</sup>

I asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs this afternoon what was his information on the attitude of the German Government towards Lord Runciman's mission. He said he had nothing very precise, but with regard to the German attitude to the Czechoslovak problem in general both Herr von Ribbentrop and Herr Woermann had repeated in vague terms the German wish to avoid any trouble and to see the question settled by an agreement. It was true that the Germans were very active in fortifying their French frontier, but he thought this was due largely to a wish to improve their negotiating position. He considered that the German Government were rather anxious since they felt that there would now be resistance against any forceful measures on their part and that the situation remained somewhat easier.

M. Bonnet was not displeased with the news which reached him from Prague either. M. Benes seemed to be in a satisfactory frame of mind. M. Bonnet had continued to impress on him strongly the necessity for a solution. With regard to Lord Runciman's mission he had, he said, insisted very vigorously with M. Benes on the necessity of accepting the proposal of His Majesty's Government. He had had some difficulty, since the Czechoslovak President had expressed the fear that Lord Runciman might suggest a solution which would weaken what was the already delicate structure of

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. See No. 555, note 3.

the State and lead to its disintegration. The French Minister had, however, finally succeeded in persuading M. Benes and had been much helped in this by being able to give an assurance that (as you had promised to the French Ambassador in London) the French Government would be kept fully and punctually informed with respect to the progress of the mission and the opinions being formed by Lord Runciman. M. Bonnet considered it important that he should be kept fully informed.

No. 573

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 4)*

*No. 361 Saving: Telegraphic [C 7892/165/18]*

BERLIN, August 3, 1938

My telegram No. 340<sup>1</sup> and my despatch No. 814.<sup>2</sup>

The decision of the German Government to bring seven or eight divisions in Germany proper and all the forces in Austria up to war strength in September is an unusual step, which, in view of the psychosis of Europe to-day, cannot but have regrettable repercussions.

It represents, in my opinion, a mixture of bluff and of real menace. The Sudeten themselves have said and Herr Hitler has said that the Sudeten problem must be settled by the autumn. If force is to be used in the last resort, this means by October, since by November military operations on land and in the air against Czechoslovakia would be greatly hampered by climatic conditions. If action is contemplated, it should therefore be taken by the end of September, and the party congress at Nuremberg (September 5-12) would afford a good opportunity for whipping up the nation for what would be described as a last big effort towards the final realisation of German unity.

It is noteworthy that the German War Office has made no attempt in this instance to conceal its intentions. Its frankness in this respect would conform to the theory that the move is initially a bluff destined to achieve Germany's object without war. It is meant as a warning both to His Majesty's Government to put pressure on Benes and to the latter to mind his step. It reinforces in this respect the idea at back of press campaign and of general state of military preparedness during last four months. Herr Hitler has, in fact, said to us quite clearly and repeatedly: 'I welcome your efforts at Prague. I desire a peaceful solution, but I and Sudeten cannot wait indefinitely.' September is now indicated as the latest date, and the menace in that respect is no less real than the bluff. Moreover, the Chancellor's impressionable nature cannot but have been deeply moved by the wild enthusiasm of the 40,000 Sudeten who attended the Breslau Festival last week. Such homage to the head of another State may be mass psychology, but east of the Danube it is such psychology which counts far more than the individual fears or reluctances

<sup>1</sup> No. 564.

<sup>2</sup> No. 575.

of older men. Observers may note little desire on the part of the more responsible Sudeten for incorporation in the Reich. Yet when the moment comes, such hesitations will be submerged in the enthusiasm of youth and of the masses. Public opinion abroad seems in this respect too apt to overlook interests and aspirations of the Sudeten themselves and to regard the problem too exclusively from angle of the German menace.

Germany learnt certain lessons from the curtain-raiser of Austria, but there were others which should be equally obvious to ourselves. Dr. Schuschnigg was a brave and honourable man, yet he was gravely mistaken, and I fear that Benes is similarly merely playing Germany's game for her.

The mission of Lord Runciman has now provided a period of respite which may be reckoned at a month or at most six weeks. But as I see it, there is a gulf not of detail but of principle which has to be bridged: on the one hand, the principle of some form of home rule; on the other, that of the maintenance of a national State on the ground that home rule in any form means present partition and future disruption. In these circumstances, unless one or the other party is prepared to go back on its principles, the gulf may well prove unbridgeable. In any case, I cannot but express the conviction that the German Government, for their part, will never accept as satisfactory, or even pretend to regard as final, any solution which does not comply with the principle of a State of nationalities as opposed to that of a national State in which the Sudeten will continue to be treated as a minority and not as a Staatsvolk ('State nation'). That is the crux of the whole matter, and even if this autumn the threat of British intervention does not [*sic*] deter her, or circumstances of themselves do not permit of action being taken by Germany which she can represent as non-aggressive, a solution on any other lines will surely be represented by the Sudeten as unacceptable and German action merely delayed until the opportune hour appears to Herr Hitler to have struck.

I am waiting for greater precision which the Military Attaché hopes to obtain from the War Office later this week as to the full scope of the military measures to be taken in September. Though amounting to a form of partial mobilisation, they will be camouflaged by the German authorities as indispensable and legitimate measures calculated to ensure the efficiency and smooth working of their army. In these circumstances I doubt if a mere protest or even an appeal will be met with any reply other than that these measures are the sole concern of Germany in the interests of peace and her own security, and that the German Government could not raise objection if His Majesty's Government were similarly to make test mobilisation of the British fleet (as they did in 1914). Any official representations on the subject which, as the result of further enquiries, you might direct me to make to the German Government would therefore have to be carefully considered both by the French Government and ourselves.

Moreover, one aspect of the psychosis here must be borne in mind. The German nation in general is just as frightened and, I believe, the army also just as perturbed as anybody else at idea of war.

No. 574

*Letter<sup>1</sup> from Mr. Neville Chamberlain to Dr. von Dirksen*  
[C 7577/1941/18]

10 DOWNING STREET, August 3, 1938

*Private and Personal.*

My dear Ambassador,

Since the conversation that we had before you proceeded on leave, some development has taken place in regard to the matters we discussed together. In particular, Lord Runciman has, by arrangement with the Czechoslovak Government, proceeded to Prague to act as mediator and conciliator. I would have liked to have discussed that appointment with you but at the time of our meeting it had not yet been made. I hope and believe that the work that Lord Runciman may be able to do in Czechoslovakia will perhaps prove a real contribution to the solution of that problem that is causing us all anxiety. We here, of course, know him better than those outside this country, but I am satisfied that he does possess in real degree just those qualities of firmness and wisdom that may enable him to make a contribution at this time of great value.

I much hope you may have had an opportunity of speaking to Herr Hitler of the main points that we covered in our conversation, and I hope you may have been able to place him in possession of the way in which my own mind was moving in regard to them. If it is possible to find with good will a settlement of the Czechoslovak question that does substantial justice to all sides of the problem, I feel that nothing would more materially facilitate the establishment of that understanding between our two countries that we both desire.

In this connexion, since I am writing may I say that I very much hope, if you get an opportunity of speaking to Herr Hitler, you will ask him to give full consideration to the contents of the personal letter that Lord Halifax recently addressed to Herr von Ribbentrop in regard to Lord Runciman's Mission.

Yours sincerely,

NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN

<sup>1</sup> This letter was sent with a covering letter to Sir N. Henderson from Sir O. Sargent on August 4 for transmission to Dr. von Dirksen. In his covering letter Sir O. Sargent wrote that Lord Halifax considered that 'in von Ribbentrop's present temper there was a real danger that he might suppress his (i.e. Lord Halifax's) letter of July 28 and not show it to Hitler at all'. The best way of guarding against this danger appeared to be for the Prime Minister to write to Dr. von Dirksen.

No. 575

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 4)*  
No. 814 [C 7891/65/18]

BERLIN, August 3, 1938

My Lord,

I have the honour to transmit to your Lordship herewith a despatch

addressed to me by the Military Attaché regarding the projected partial mobilisation of the German army in September next. Reference to this despatch is made in my telegram No. 361, Saving,<sup>1</sup> of to-day, to which it furnishes the essential background.

I have, &c.,  
NEVILLE HENDERSON

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 575  
*Colonel Mason-MacFarlane to Sir N. Henderson*

(No. 6.)

BERLIN, August 3, 1938

Sir,

I have the honour to inform your Excellency that I have ascertained from the Oberkommando des Heeres that it is the intention of the German High Command to carry out what would seem little short of a partial test mobilisation in September.

This will affect seven or eight divisions in Germany proper and all formations in Austria.

I understand that it is unlikely that the operation will commence before about the 8th September.

It is also intended to retain all second-year men sent on harvest leave in July and August with the colours until the 1st November, instead of discharging them on their normal date, which would be the 1st October.

A.—*The 'Test Mobilisation'.*

It was explained to me at the Attaché-Gruppe of the Oberkommando des Heeres that it was intended to bring all formations concerned up to war strength, and that, in the case of formations in Germany, they would be concentrated at various 'Truppenübungsplätze' (training grounds), where the divisions would carry out exercises under their divisional commanders. Practically all these divisions would be in different army corps.

It was stated also that the object of the operation was to test arrangements for mobilisation, and, in particular, the machinery for calling up reservists, and to give reserve personnel higher training. The High Command were said to be anxious to try out the various alterations which have been introduced since the last operation of this type—on a much smaller scale—was carried out in Bavaria.

As regards Austria, it was explained that the High Command were naturally desirous of discovering to what extent it might already be possible to carry out the process of mobilisation in Austria. I was told that they fully anticipated that the result would be a pigsty mess ('Sauhaufen').

I was unable to get a direct answer to my question as to whether mobilisation would include the embodiment of reserve formations or whether it would be confined to bringing the active formations concerned up to war strength.

<sup>1</sup> No. 573.

In the meantime I consider that we must be prepared to reckon with the former possibility.

*B.—Retention of Second-Year Men with the Colours.*

The explanation advanced by the Attaché-Gruppe on this point was that the presence of these men with the colours, during the first month of service of the recruit class which joins on the 1st October, was desirable for purposes of instruction and demonstration.

It is obvious that, particularly at the present juncture, the intention to hold a test mobilisation on a large scale in September, and to retain additional men with the colours in October, is most dangerous and provocative.

It is possible that the German Government intend to issue more exact information as to what they propose to do and why. It has already been announced very vaguely in the press that reserve training on a large scale is to be carried out this autumn, and it is not unlikely that this may be followed up later by further communiqués of a nature calculated to be as reassuring as possible.

Such communications could, however, only have reference to the proposed test mobilisation. I doubt if even the Germans can find a satisfactory explanation for the necessity to retain much additional personnel with the colours throughout October.

From the purely military point of view it is natural that the German High Command should wish to test the running of their mobilisation machinery. It would seem, however, that they are proposing to do so to an extent and on a scale which was never approached even in pre-war days. It is equally natural that the High Command should desire to retain their trained second-year men with the colours until approximately the date on which climatic considerations would seem likely to postpone any possibility of war till next spring.

Politically both their intentions cannot fail to be regarded as desperately provocative.

If partial mobilisation is carried out on the scale which has been told to me, it is hard to see how at least Czechoslovakia can fail to mobilise in reply. With at least two—and possibly more—neighbouring countries in an even partially mobilised state, the general atmosphere must inevitably become very dangerous, and a small spark might well produce a general conflagration.

It seems obvious that we must anticipate that at least Czechoslovakia would reply to a big test mobilisation by mobilising herself. From the military point of view, with Austria mobilised on her exposed flank, she would merely be giving Germany anything up to four or more days' start if she did not do so.

There is, however, a further danger, even if no reply were made to Germany's action. If Germany were to succeed in putting herself into the position of being partially mobilised and momentarily at a great military advantage, it is perfectly possible that extreme elements in the Government



might persuade Herr Hitler that a heaven-sent moment had arrived and that he might be induced to take advantage of it.

I had the opportunity yesterday of again discussing matters with the acting head of the *Attaché-Gruppe*, who had originally given me my information on Monday. I spoke very frankly to him, and he privately agreed that the intentions of the High Command were deplorable.

He pointed out, however, that Generaloberst von Brauchitsch was only carrying out the wishes of the German Government, which was tantamount to playing the tune called by the extremer elements of the party. There was a limit to the extent to which General von Brauchitsch could refuse to comply with the Government's demands. The army was not yet in a position to stand up to the party and go into open opposition. It might never succeed in being able to do this. But, in the meantime, the general's policy was to oppose the party as little as he safely could, so as to give himself a freer hand in furthering his work for the army generally. He was in a most insecure position—as any Commander-in-chief in Germany must be at the moment—and would be dismissed at once if he obstructed party policy. If General von Brauchitsch were to suffer the same fate as General von Fritsch, the chances were that the army would find themselves with a Himmler as Commander-in-Chief.

I represented the possible dangers which must arise if the German Government carry out their intentions, much as I have set them out above, and he assured me that he was equally aware of them. He was particularly apprehensive of what might occur if the party extremists were in fact to find themselves in the position of having gained several days' start on their neighbours as regards partial mobilisation. He stressed the fact that he was only giving me his personal opinion, and I hope that his views and opinions will be kept strictly confidential.

He said that he was absolutely convinced that the German public as a whole were violently opposed to war. He gave Goebbels credit for having his finger very accurately on Germany's pulse, and thought that this was a reassuring fact, as Goebbels would hesitate to press anything which he knew to be utterly unpopular.

He also said that he was convinced that Herr Hitler intended to keep the British Government fully informed of what was going on—probably through the medium of Wiedermann [*sic*].

In connexion with German military activity, I have recently secured definite evidence of the following points:—

- (a) The number of men away this year from most units on harvest leave is about 50 per cent. Second-year men are being sent in preference to first-year men.
- (b) In several cases *Arbeitsdienst* detachments have been taken off harvest work at extremely short notice, and have been sent to the western frontier—in most cases to the Saar area—to work on defences. This is more than usually striking in view of the exceptionally heavy harvest. I saw several big landowners up in Pommern yesterday,

and they all agreed they had never seen such a good harvest. Most of them had imported Hungarian labour to deal with it.

- (c) In the Steglitz area men of the 1913 class appear to have been called up for reserve training from the 15th August to the 13th September. This may well be normal short-term reserve training.
- (d) It is almost certain that a Landwehr division is to be mobilised or, at any rate, embodied in East Prussia in September.

*To Conclude.*

The situation, as explained to me, is clearly fraught with dangerous possibilities. It is clear that the party is succeeding in forcing the army to take action which is deprecated by the moderate elements in the army, but which the latter are unable or unwilling for reasons of policy to refuse to take.

I think that we can summarise matters by saying that, while it is reasonably certain that there is no intention or desire on the part of the army to take action against Czechoslovakia, the possibility that the Government may have intentions in this respect is becoming much greater, and they are forcing the army to take steps which may well produce a crisis or, alternatively, put them into a position in which they will feel that the cards are so favourable that they can and should start the game.

I would like, finally, to point out that, although I have used the word 'mobilisation' rather freely in this despatch, the head of the Attaché-Gruppe referred throughout to 'calling up reservists', 'bringing formations up to strength', &c., and avoided the use of the word. He entirely agreed with me that what it was proposed to do must inevitably appear very like mobilisation to foreign observers, and allowed me to refer to 'partial mobilisation' without comment. We ought, however, in any action which it may become necessary to take, to be careful in the meantime not to accuse the Germans of an intention to 'mobilise'. Mobilisation is a very definite process, and it is possible that the Germans intend to stop short of complete mobilisation of the formations affected. In such a case a suggestion that 'mobilisation' was intended might be quite correctly denied by the Germans, and our case might thereby be weakened.

I have, &c.,

F. N. MASON-MACFARLANE  
*Colonel, Military Attaché.*

No. 576

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson to Viscount Halifax*  
[C 11048/1941/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, August 3, 1938

Dear Secretary of State,

I am extremely perturbed over the German military measures contemplated for September: (see my telegram No. 361 Saving<sup>1</sup> and my despatch No. 814<sup>2</sup> by this bag).

<sup>1</sup> No. 573.

<sup>2</sup> No. 575.

Germany has waited three months to see if, by chance (which they never believed) Benes really meant business. The extremists have now overcome Hitler's hesitations and persuaded him that something more than Anglo-French pressure at Prague is necessary.

I do not believe that any representations now by us will make the German Government renounce these measures. They will say they are legitimate and indispensable from the point of view of military efficiency and that it is too late to modify them anyway. They will point to Benes' delays and his contemplated three year military service law as the initial provocation. They will retort that, if an agreed solution is found before September, such military measures will have no significance and so on and so forth. If we, or the French, say that we reserve our right to take corresponding measures, they will reply, 'By all means do so: that is your affair'. They will protest their pacific intentions.

It constitutes, in fact, another case of their theory that nothing happens unless force is displayed. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Yours ever,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

<sup>3</sup> A personal reference is here omitted.

No. 577

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 4, 8.40 p.m.)*

*No. 343 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 7932/4786/18]*

BERLIN, August 4, 1938

Following from Military Attaché for Director of Military Operations and Intelligence, reference my despatch No. 66<sup>1</sup> August 3.

I have during the past month consistently endeavoured to discount rumours which ran contrary to my evidence and personal opinions, regarding intention on Germany's part to take military action against Czechoslovakia. The cry of wolf has often been raised. Events at the end of May resulting from military information which I was unable to confirm are probably largely responsible for the present situation. I wish therefore to make it quite clear that although I am still of opinion that it does not necessarily follow that Herr Hitler has made up his mind irrevocably to employ force against Czechoslovakia this autumn the possibility that he may do so has now in my opinion become more real. The extent to which the Government have apparently forced the army command to undertake in September what is in effect very like 'partial mobilization' can hardly fail in due course to produce a dangerous situation. Much may depend upon attitude of Field-Marshal Göring and I consider that the fact that the army has been induced to follow the Government's policy may mean that Field-Marshal Göring is now out of the moderation camp. If it is not too late to endeavour to restrain

<sup>1</sup> Presumably an error for despatch No. 6 (No. 575 Enclosure).

the German Government as regards its military programme for September I suggest that the best method of minimizing the effect abroad would be to endeavour to induce the German Government to publish frankly exactly what they intend to do and to give evidence of good faith by spreading the programme over as long a period as possible, so that some formations can already be 'demobilizing' before others commence the process. I do not consider concrete suggestions regarding German military activities can go beyond this. German Government have logical answers to any other reproaches.

#### No. 578

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 4, 8.40 p.m.)*  
*No. 344 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 7935/65/18]*

BERLIN, August 4, 1938

My telegram No. 340.<sup>1</sup>

Military Attaché today saw the Acting Chief of Intelligence at the German War Office. He obtained official confirmation of the intended action of German army this autumn regarding calling up reservists as given him by Acting Head of Attaché Group and reported in my [*sic*] No. 6 of August 3.<sup>2</sup> Acting Chief of Intelligence was careful not to use the word mobilization. He contended that from military point of view the intended action was perfectly normal, but he admits that it was possibly psychologically unsound, and added Germans had never laid definite claims to being great psychologists. He readily agreed that it would doubtless be reported abroad that something like mobilization on a considerable scale was taking place. He hoped however that owing to frankness already exhibited in the press and to the fact that nothing could be done covertly, opinion abroad would realize nothing but a process of oiling the wheels was going on. There could be no question of concealment even if it were desired. Notices regarding calling up of reservists would have to be placarded in all localities affected.

Please inform the War Office.

<sup>1</sup> No. 564.

<sup>2</sup> The reference is to Report No. 6 by the Military Attaché. See No. 575 Enclosure.

#### No. 579

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 4, 8.40 p.m.)*  
*No. 345 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 7925/65/18]*

BERLIN, August 4, 1938

My telegram No. 338.<sup>1</sup>

Military Attaché was informed unofficially at German War Office today that it is the present intention of the German Government to allow no motor

<sup>1</sup> No. 563.

travel whatever to regular officers of foreign armies in the recent prohibited areas on western frontier. It will therefore not be possible for a regular officer to cross the western German frontier by road anywhere between Dutch and Swiss frontiers. Maps showing prohibited areas and detailed instructions have been promised to the Military Attaché by the German War Office, but have not yet been received.

Please inform War Office.

No. 580

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 4, 8.40 p.m.)*  
*No. 346 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 7926/65/18]*

BERLIN, August 4, 1938

Military Attaché was told today at German War Office that training programme of nearly all pioneer units in German army had been cancelled and that most of them had been sent off hurriedly to work on defences in frontier sectors.

Please inform War Office.

No. 581

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 4, 8.40 p.m.)*  
*No. 348 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 7988/1941/18]*

BERLIN, August 4, 1938

My telegram No. 361 Saving.<sup>1</sup>

I mentioned to the German Ambassador at London who lunched with me today my apprehensions in regard to military measures contemplated by German War Office in September. I told him that I was not speaking from military standpoint which could probably be justified on grounds of increased efficiency but solely from that of the impression likely to be produced abroad.

The Ambassador said that he was unaware of what was intended. I gave him brief description without quoting the source of my information. I added that I myself did not know whether bringing formations up to war strength meant just calling up reservists for divisions affected which in the case of 7 divisions in Reich and 5 in Austria might merely mean increase in strength by some 50,000 men or included actual formation of reserve divisions i.e. possibly an extra 250,000 men. Latter eventuality would, I said, amount to partial mobilization and might easily produce panic in Czechoslovakia and elsewhere. However expedient on purely military grounds, such a step would assuredly be misunderstood abroad and if anything happened would be held as proof of German intention to be aggressive. As possible palliatives I, speaking personally, . . .<sup>2</sup> reservists called up to minimum, necessity for full

<sup>1</sup> No. 573.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

publicity in advance and spreading of operation over long period so that all reservists would not be under arms at the same time.

The Ambassador said that he would make enquiries. He is leaving for Silesia but added that he hoped to see the Chancellor at Berchtesgaden in about a fortnight's time; incidentally he spontaneously assured me that Field-Marshal Göring was on the side of moderates.

I also mentioned this matter to the Italian Ambassador who called on me this morning, again without quoting the sources. He told me that his Military Attaché was away but he would ask him to make enquiries as soon as he returned. While appreciating the risk of repercussions if Germans were to call up reservists in such numbers as to give the impression of partial mobilization, Italian Ambassador took the line that nevertheless the object of the measure was in the following sense pacific: 'Germany wished to make it quite clear that unless Sudeten question were settled by peaceable methods she would be prepared in the last resort to go to extreme lengths. Without such a warning Czechs would never agree to concessions which were necessary to enable the question to be settled pacifically.'

#### No. 582

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 6)*

*No. 358 Saving: Telegraphic [C 7993/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 4, 1938

My telegram No. 345 Saving.<sup>1</sup>

Lord Runciman's arrival at Prague yesterday is prominently reported in the press. Lord Runciman was met by representatives of the President and of the Government, and by Herr Kundt and Dr. Sebekovsky representing the Sudeten German party.

Instead of the expected full dress meeting between the Sudeten German party's representatives and the Committee of Political Ministers, Herr Kundt and Dr. Rosche had a conversation with the President of the Council. The Sudeten German party's press bureau have issued a communiqué stating that on this occasion Dr. Hodza took the opportunity to answer five questions which had been put to him by Herr Kundt on July 29. The answer was to the effect that the texts communicated to the Sudeten German party (the Nationality Statute and the Language Bill) remained valid, with the proviso that they would, like the Sudeten German party's 'sketch' of June 7, be a matter for negotiation. The Government's latest proposals with regard to the question of self-administration were, with a similar proviso, the Government's final proposals for discussion. Nothing was, however, in its final form as the proposals were held to be a basis for the co-operation of the Sudeten German party in the legislative work which would take place on them. In so far as the party's 'sketch' contained proposals which went further than the

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram repeated press comment in advance of Lord Runciman's arrival.

measures which had been elaborated by the Government, the Government's counter-proposals would be communicated to the party not later than after the present proposals of the Government had been disposed of. The same held good of the Government's definitive attitude to the whole contents of the Sudeten German party's 'sketch'. The present conversations between the Government and the party would be continued and developed into official negotiations.

I learn from official circles that Government's latest proposal is that negotiations with Henlein party should now be continued by committee of six of the coalition parties. I do not know whether this has been agreed to by the Henlein party.

Copy to Berlin.

No. 583

*Letter from Viscount Runciman to Viscount Halifax<sup>1</sup>*

[C 8509/1941/18]

LORD RUNCIMAN'S MISSION, PRAGUE

After disposing of the press men in London we were assailed in the train and also on arrival at Pilsen and Marienbad. We were unable to silence all of them, and I arranged to meet the press of the world soon after my arrival at Prague. They were crammed into the big dining room at the Hotel Alcron where I said what is reported as the official statement (see enclosure). It satisfied them and left me with breathing time. Today we are going to issue a short statement to the effect that I have seen the President, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the Committee of the Sudeten Deutsche Party. We had useful conversations and are to meet again at an early date.

The President took the opportunity of expounding to me in full his most recent conception of the point of view of the Sudeten D.P. as well as his own. He has come on a long way since he received your message three or four weeks ago, but he does not show much sign of an understanding or respect for the Germans in Czechoslovakia. There is a wide gap between him and them on first principles and all that I can hope for in the end will be a little accommodation on some practical problems.

The doors have been opened to me freely—and I am very uncomfortable, for they are all apt to expect too much: disappointment may be bitter.

This afternoon I saw the Sudeten D.P. delegation and I have now got them into one room with my experts. This is one of the orthodox manoeuvres for compromise, but, alas, I have never seen a case less likely to yield to this treatment. At all events I have got them going, and I can only pray for a spirit of reasonableness to prevail. It is a tough business.

Newton has been most helpful. Troutbeck is always at hand and is a useful observer. Gwatkin is invaluable and Geoffrey Peto very useful. I did well to get Stopford.

Yours ever,

WALTER R.

<sup>1</sup> This letter is undated. The date would appear to be August 4.

August 3, 1938

Lord Runciman met the representatives of the Press at 6 p.m. He explained that he was not going to make a formal speech or to answer questions. He wished to thank the Lord Mayor, the Ministers who had met him, the Sudeten leaders and the representatives of the Czech people for their welcome. He said that he came as an independent person, acting with no instructions, and free from prejudice, and that he had been told before he left England that his presence would be welcome.

He said that he came as one who had had forty years of experience in various phases of political life in his own country, and that he had learnt that permanent peace and tranquillity can only be established on a basis of mutual consent. He came as a friend of all and an enemy of none. In this spirit he would wish with the assistance of the Press to interpret to the world through them the difficulties by which Central Europe is surrounded. Some of these troubles could be and would be explained to him and he hoped that it would be possible to get to the bottom of them. He added that if we face what emerges in a spirit of good will there is much to be said for the exercise of patience as well as insight. In fostering that spirit of good will, he said, the representatives of the world Press could make a notable contribution to peace.

Lord Runciman then said that it was his wish to maintain close cooperation with the Press and to do his best to keep them informed.

Various Press representatives were then introduced to Lord Runciman, with all of whom he exchanged some words of greeting.

Lady Runciman and members of Lord Runciman's staff were present at the reception.

## No. 584

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received August 5, 10.0 p.m.)*

*No. 351 Telegraphic [C 8011/65/18]*

BERLIN, August 5, 1938, 8.35 p.m.

My telegram No. 369 Saving.<sup>1</sup>

I regard the appearance of this article as welcome and significant.

It appears to indicate that suggestions made by myself and by my Military Attaché have been heeded, and that German Government intend to be reasonably frank as regards their military reservist programme for this autumn.

Furthermore the fact that it is now proposed to spread the calling up of reservists over a considerable period is reassuring. It is however reasonably clear from the article that more than merely making active formations up to strength is intended. The embodiment of large reserve formations must apparently be anticipated.

<sup>1</sup> No. 585.



*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received August 6, 1938)*

*No. 369 Saving: Telegraphic [G 8010/65/15]*

BERLIN, August 5, 1938

My telegram No. 344.<sup>1</sup>

Following is an extract from an article in today's issue of the military periodical 'Deutsche Wehr' which is reprinted in an inconspicuous page of the 'Völkischer Beobachter':—

Until 1934 before the introduction of conscription there could be no time-expired reserves in the old Reichswehr. Since 1935 however the reservists have been increasing year by year. It is a new task of the army to keep them in touch with changing military technique. The importance of manoeuvres in units consisting exclusively of reservists becomes clear when it is remembered that a great part of the infantry divisions in the world war consisted of such reserve formations. It will be the same in future.

Abroad those States which were able to pursue their armament without interruption have for years devoted special attention to the further training of the Reserve. In accordance with the experience gained it was resolved for practice purposes to create whole units consisting purely of reservists. For example, France in September 1934 tried out a reserve division brought up to war strength in peace-time manoeuvres on the basis of its war-time task. The success of this—the fourth—French reserve division furnished confirmation of the rightness and necessity of complete exercises with reservists. France then followed this experiment at various intervals with similar manoeuvres by the 5th, 42nd and 52nd divisions.

After other States had followed the course of further military training for reservists Germany naturally devoted considerable attention to this question. After 1935 she put herself on an equality with the highly developed condition attained since the end of the war by every technical and organisational means in the Armed States. Preparations during the past three years have placed us in the same position as the freely armed States to assemble reserve troops in complete units and to train them in larger tactical bodies. This year's autumn manoeuvres are to be used for this purpose. There is no doubt that they will represent a definite strengthening of the army.

In the coming autumn manoeuvres of the army the theory inspiring the war service law (Wehrleistungsgesetz) of July 19, 1938,<sup>2</sup> will be applied. The autumn manoeuvres of units composed for the most part of reservists will be carried out on a war footing not only from the point of view of the exercises. Their conduct will also be subject to war conditions in so far as industry will also be involved in their execution. The horses and motor vehicles required for replacement and transport will be procured by requisitioning. The population is bound to render to the troops the personal and material services

<sup>1</sup> No. 578.

<sup>2</sup> See No. 509 in Volume I of this Series.

which war experience has shown to be necessary. The conduct of the manoeuvres will however be such that measures interfering with public and private life will not be undertaken everywhere at the same time and not on too great a scale. The assembly of larger reserve formations and the exercises themselves will be spread over a considerable period and will be separated from each other as regards place. For similar reasons and in order to spare agriculture and industry as far as possible the reserve formations exercising in certain districts will be recruited in those districts. Horses and motor vehicles will be similarly dealt with.

No. 586

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 30 Saving: Telegraphic [C 7874/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, August 5, 1938

Your telegram No. 417.<sup>1</sup>

I should be glad if you would take some suitable opportunity also to draw the attention of the Czechoslovak Government to the following passage from my speech in the House of Lords on 27th July:<sup>2</sup>

'There is one other thing I think that I must say before I leave Lord Runciman and it is this. We cannot but feel that any public man of British race and steeped in British experience and thought may have it in his power for this reason to make a contribution of peculiar value. The British people, both at home and in the Dominions, have repeatedly found themselves confronted with the problem of reconciling the unity of the State with the position of men of a different race included within the body politic. The British Commonwealth itself is the outstanding example of the attainment of single unity through great diversity. It may be, and no doubt is, that the particular problem that faces the Czechoslovak Government is not strictly analogous to those with which the British Government have had to deal, but it is of the same order of difficulty, and requires the same kind of genius for its solution. It, therefore, naturally occurs to British thought that the solution of the problem created by the position of different nationalities within a single State is most likely to be found through the application in some form appropriate to local conditions of the principle of partnership in self-administration, by which our own problems, not totally dissimilar, have been so happily resolved, and that in a form which has, through the contentment so brought to many different races, been the seed of greater strength to the whole community of which they form part.'

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 570.

<sup>2</sup> Parl. Deb. 5th Ser., H. of L., vol. 110, cols. 1282-3.

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received August 6, 1938)*  
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<sup>1</sup> No. 578.

<sup>2</sup> See No. 509 in Volume I of this Series.

which war experience has shown to be necessary. The conduct of the manoeuvres will however be such that measures interfering with public and private life will not be undertaken everywhere at the same time and not on too great a scale. The assembly of larger reserve formations and the exercises themselves will be spread over a considerable period and will be separated from each other as regards place. For similar reasons and in order to spare agriculture and industry as far as possible the reserve formations exercising in certain districts will be recruited in those districts. Horses and motor vehicles will be similarly dealt with.

No. 586

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 30 Saving: Telegraphic [G 7874/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, August 5, 1938

Your telegram No. 417.<sup>1</sup>

I should be glad if you would take some suitable opportunity also to draw the attention of the Czechoslovak Government to the following passage from my speech in the House of Lords on 27th July:<sup>2</sup>

'There is one other thing I think that I must say before I leave Lord Runciman and it is this. We cannot but feel that any public man of British race and steeped in British experience and thought may have it in his power for this reason to make a contribution of peculiar value. The British people, both at home and in the Dominions, have repeatedly found themselves confronted with the problem of reconciling the unity of the State with the position of men of a different race included within the body politic. The British Commonwealth itself is the outstanding example of the attainment of single unity through great diversity. It may be, and no doubt is, that the particular problem that faces the Czechoslovak Government is not strictly analogous to those with which the British Government have had to deal, but it is of the same order of difficulty, and requires the same kind of genius for its solution. It, therefore, naturally occurs to British thought that the solution of the problem created by the position of different nationalities within a single State is most likely to be found through the application in some form appropriate to local conditions of the principle of partnership in self-administration, by which our own problems, not totally dissimilar, have been so happily resolved, and that in a form which has, through the contentment so brought to many different races, been the seed of greater strength to the whole community of which they form part.'

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 570.

<sup>2</sup> Parl. Deb. 5th Ser., H. of L., vol. 110, cols. 1282-3.

*Letter from Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

[C 11048/1941/18]

YORK, August 5, 1938

My dear Henderson,

Very many thanks for several letters which I have never answered. But as you will believe the pressure has been heavy and I have kept putting off the attempt to find time to write. It has been of the greatest help to me to have your views and judgments.

I have just got your two letters of August 3<sup>1</sup> and your telegram 361 Saving<sup>2</sup> of the same day, and as I have got a free afternoon, I would like to give you my own impressions for what they may be worth. It perhaps helps to get our minds together.

We cannot I suppose judge with certainty of what may be German intentions. I find it difficult to believe that, *if they were convinced it meant a general war*, they would think it worth while to try and insist by force on their full desiderata for Czechoslovakia, whatever these may be. Indeed I would have guessed that if they were so convinced, they would in fact find means of putting up, with good or ill grace, with a great deal less. And it is on this no doubt that Benes or those behind him are tempted to count.

I should judge therefore that in all German policy at this time there was a strong element of bluff, in the sense that calling up of reservists, Eastern [*sic*] fortifications, bellicose speeches etc., were all calculated to make us feel that they were ready to go to war, and that therefore we on our side should hesitate to bluff, and still less to take military action against them. And I sometimes wonder whether it can be true that the Germans are the only people in Europe today who are not afraid, and whether they on their side may not be getting reports from their secret sources (just as we are from ours on the other side!) suggesting that the democracies are going to have a preventive war etc., etc., and that they must prepare for it. I am constantly struck by the recurrence of reports of troop movements in this or that place, which when investigated turn out baseless. But it suggests that there is much mischiefmaking about, and that nerves are strained.

All this is not to say that the Germans may not be planning the worst. There is a good deal of evidence to show that a party at least is. Still less does it prove that if there was the 'bloodbath' among the S.D. Hitler would or could hold his hand, whatever the cost. But it does suggest the importance of our holding as firmly as we can to our line of (as John Buchan put it to me the other day) perpetually telling Benes of what we might *not* do in the event of trouble: and of tactfully reminding the Germans of what we *might*

<sup>1</sup> One of these letters is printed as No. 576. The other letter reported that Herr von Ribbentrop had been told by his doctors 'to stay on in the country' and that Sir N. Henderson did not expect to see him until 'just before the Horthy visit about August 22'.

<sup>2</sup> No. 573.

do. And meanwhile use every effort to coerce the two sides, by joint pressure and persuasion, into agreement.

And that brings us to Runciman. If he can induce agreement, well and good. If he can't, we must I think on our side be very careful that he does not take any action that would have the effect of committing this country further than it is already committed, to take action in the event of Germany taking military action, let us say, in favour of a solution more drastic than Runciman has recommended. If he fails to get agreement, he can do four things.

1. Merely record the fact with regret, and come away.
2. Record the fact, and say that he thinks such and such a solution was fair and that the blame for disagreement lies with the S.D.
3. As in 2, but that the blame lay with the Czechs.
4. Go a step further, and say that in view of their inability to agree, and the improbability of their being able to settle down together, the only chance was a clean cut(?)<sup>3</sup>—by way of Plebiscite.

Of these, 2 would clearly be very embarrassing for us: for your German friends would then presumably say that, as they expected, we had proved either incapable or unwilling to get reason out of Benes, that our Mediator had been collared by him, and that therefore there was nothing left for them to do but to take justice by force!

And this action on their part would be in face of an expression of opinion by an impartial investigator which people in this country and in most parts of the world would accept as fair.

In such circumstances, the pressure to intervene actively might be very great.

If he said that the blame lay with the Czechs, then I would suppose that whatever the Germans did, people would say that the Czechs had had their chance and, however much they condemned the German action, people would incline to feel that the Czechs had brought it on themselves.

The Plebiscite always seems to me the devil, and as likely to precipitate as to prevent. I don't rule it out of my mind as a last resort, but the difficulties are enormous.

What is the question to be put? Who is to supervise the conduct of the plebiscite? What area is to vote? International troops—how and where? And meanwhile, incidents everywhere, under the stimulus of local whipping up of feeling and assisted from across three frontiers. No. I can't find any comfort in the plebiscite, except as a threat to Benes.

It is obviously very difficult for anybody to predict how R. is likely to get on, and very difficult, if not impossible, for us to suggest to him as he gets to breaking point what he should say. It will want a good deal of thinking, and we may not have very long to think in. And I only put all this to you very confidentially in order that you may know what is in my mind.

I am myself slightly disposed to hope that R. may pull it off: but no doubt the odds are long.

<sup>3</sup> This query is in the original text.

Supposing the worst happens. The French will presumably mobilise, unless indeed the Czechs have so behaved as to warrant the French saying they have been eminently unreasonable and therefore doing nothing. I should doubt

- (a) the French attacking the Siegfried line,
- (b) the Germans attacking France.

And in one form or another, I should have guessed that there would have been talking; after the Germans had created a situation in which they would have made it very difficult, except after imposing on them defeat through general war, to maintain the present situation unchanged. And I have always felt that to fight a war for 1, 2, or 3 years to protect or recreate something that you knew you could not directly protect, and probably could never recreate, did not make sense.

But that feeling should not prevent us, or you, from constantly repeating March 24 warnings, and doing our utmost to get it into the very stupid heads of the Germans that if they insisted on stepping on the spring, the gun was awfully likely to go off. It is our only chance as I see it of preventing them doing it, and it is a difficult line to ride, without exposing ourselves to humiliation if we don't go to war. And that, with you, I have no intention of doing over Czechoslovakia if I can avoid it. France is obviously a different matter, and I have always presumed that this difference is as present to the German mind as it is to ours.

Therefore, I come back to the line of March 24, which I am sure is right, and nothing that any of us ever say or do ought to give any tittle of encouragement to the Germans to believe that the danger of British intervention is negligible.

I think it is very important that Runciman should have the aspect of things as you see them very present to his mind. I would accordingly suggest that you should write an appreciation from time to time to Newton, which you would ask him to give to Runciman. You could tell him that I had asked you to do so.

Meanwhile, I am sorry for you being in Berlin, where the atmosphere in all respects must be beastly. But we are all in on this very disagreeable job and yours is not the least important part! Write as often as you can or like. It is very helpful.

Yours ever,  
HALIFAX

No. 588

*Letter from Viscount Runciman to Viscount Halifax*

[C 8509/1941/18]

LORD RUNCIMAN'S MISSION, PRAGUE, August 5, 1938

The process of winnowing goes on day by day. Last night the Sudeten delegation came here for a second visit in order to supply to us a full statement of their case in English as well as German. They were so anxious to leave

nothing unsaid that they stayed in our hotel until 1.30 this morning! Meantime the conversations between the Czech Government and the Sudetens have been slowed, for I am anxious to prevent a premature uncompromising statement coming out on either side. Nothing could be better than the tone and temper of the various parties, although the Sudetens were not expansive until we had been hard at our conversations for some time when we broke down their coolness and were able to enjoy some frank talk about all the things that matter.

Today I saw the Prime Minister again and a little later the Foreign Minister as well. Then after luncheon Benes talked to me for an hour and a half, asseverating more than once his determination for his part to reach a settlement on the chief practical points. As for doctrines or principles he was much less respectful to the controversialists in his description of the points which divide them. I am not satisfied with the attitude of him and his ministers on *some* points although I think all of them intend to be helpful in their own way. Anyhow it is far too soon to expect that we can see daylight.

This afternoon I have seen the Social Democratic Party and tomorrow I am to meet some of the outsiders. Hugh Wilson, the American Ambassador in Berlin, is to sit next to me at lunch, and needless to say the French Minister is watching the proceedings with much interest.

My little team is working admirably, and were it not for the heat Prague would be quite pleasant.

Yours ever,  
R.

No. 589

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 8, 1938)

No. 352 *Telegraphic* [C 8012/1941/18]

BERLIN, August 6, 1938

General Sir Ian Hamilton<sup>1</sup> flew down yesterday at Chancellor's invitation to visit him at Berchtesgaden.

Conversation which lasted for the best part of two hours was very friendly and Herr Hitler only became oratorical when discussing Sudeten question. In the latter respect main points were: the Czechs were presuming on their weakness. He (Herr Hitler) was being continually vexed by incidents. What would the French say if German aeroplanes flew over Maginot line? His blood ran cold at the thought of war but *incidents had got to stop*.

Herr Hitler closely enquired about Lord Runciman. When the General referred to his impartiality and honesty but also to his democratic views, the Chancellor observed that right of the Sudeten to self-determination was

<sup>1</sup> General Sir Ian Hamilton was visiting Germany with other representatives of the British Legion.



based on democratic principles. This can be satisfied if Czechoslovakia were administered on the Swiss model.

The rest of the conversation seemed to have been on normal lines, Chancellor's main complaint being that British press always described him as despot and tyrant whereas he governed constitutionally and democratically in the best sense.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

No. 590

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson to Viscount Halifax*  
[C 11048/1941/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, August 6, 1938

Dear Secretary of State,

For what my opinion is worth the last thing which the Germans want is serious trouble or to be involved in a general war. The German military preparations, whatever they may be now or later, have not that object at all. We must not make the mistake of letting the Germans think that we believe this. Nor, however, are they entirely bluffing. War is always a possibility, and while not wanting it they wish to show us and the Czechs and the world that they are ready—if must be—to resort to it, if a peaceful solution of the Sudeten problem proves irrealisable.

I believe that if we really showed our teeth Hitler would not dare to make war to-day. Nevertheless in my opinion that would be the greatest tragedy of all. It would be a Pyrrhic victory which, though it might be acclaimed as final, in fact would merely mean postponing the evil day. We do not want another May 21st. A second such rebuff to Hitler would never be forgotten or forgiven and 'Der Tag' would become as inevitable as in the years preceding 1914.

Herr Hitler and the Sudeten have got to have some considerable satisfaction out of our efforts at Prague during the past three months; otherwise our object will have failed. We undertook in May a *major* operation calculated to prove that even the most vital problems were capable of settlement without recourse to force. We cannot hope to prove this thesis, if we allow the Czechs to fob us off with a prophylactic treatment which amounts to little more than a new minority Statute. The Sudeten, however unpleasant their demands may be and however much they may constitute the first step on the road to total secession, are not asking to-day for a plebiscite or 'Anschluss' and do admit central control over finance, foreign policy and the military forces.

I feel all this very strongly. Just as I was always convinced and years ago that Austria must inevitably come into Germany sooner or later, so I am convinced that the Sudeten must also do so in the end. The faint possibility to the contrary I estimate at 5 per cent. Yet even that is worth trying. The main objective of our Prague negotiations was to produce a *détente* in a situa-

tion which, if no alleviation was found, might easily lead to war. There can, I am quite convinced, be no such *détente* except on the lines of some form of home rule. We cannot honourably go back on the principle of self-determination, or one day Germany will swallow the Czechs also. That principle is the main safeguard of the Czechs themselves. If they deny it to the Sudeten, it will one day be denied to them.

My Belgian colleague who was down at Bayreuth recently when Hitler was there witnessed the scenes which occurred when large numbers of Sudeten came there (presumably for propaganda purposes, not the opera). He told me that there were tears in Hitler's eyes when they acclaimed him. It was the same at the Breslau gathering, which 40,000 Sudeten athletes attended. Crocodile tears some will say, but that view would be an error in psychology and the effect of such scenes on the impressionable Hitler cannot be minimized.

Another thing . . .<sup>1</sup>

Personally I just sit and pray for one thing, namely that Lord Runciman will live up to the rôle of an impartial British Liberal statesman. I cannot believe that he will allow himself to be influenced by ancient history or even arguments about strategic frontiers and economics in preference to high moral principles. The great and courageous game which you and the Prime Minister are playing will be lost, in my humble opinion, if he does not come out on the side of the higher principles, for which in fact the British Empire really stands. As I have said before, if Germany was a small nation, 90 per cent. of the House of Commons and of the British public would be at least for home rule for the Sudeten. Any other decision or advice on the part of a British mediator in [*sic*] Lord Runciman's standing would be disastrous and the precedent which he is creating will be lost to the world. I am terribly impressed by the bigness of the precedent which is being set by this mission. If it succeeds it opens up vast possibilities. If it fails, we are back in shallows and in miseries. And, believe me, it will fail unless home rule is the substance of his report. One may be sorry for the Czechs; yet the whole is greater than the part. One may hate to see Germany encouraged: yet the moral principle is in the end of far far greater importance.

I had a long talk with von Dirksen. I have reported some of it by this bag, but behind it all was the idea that I was talking to him before he sees Hitler. I tried to reinforce the line taken by the Prime Minister in his interview with Dirksen and by you in your letter to Ribbentrop. Dirksen told me that Hitler listened to Neurath and that Göring was on the side of the moderates. The latter may or may not be true but my confidence in the correctness of Dirksen's appreciations was shaken by the confidential assertions of Neurath's own son-in-law (von Mackensen) who told my Belgian colleague that Neurath was very unhappy because he was being completely ignored, and never saw Hitler. It is hard to know what to believe here.

I feel we shall have to keep cool heads during the next month in regard

<sup>1</sup> A report from a neutral source given to Sir N. Henderson in strict confidence is here omitted.

to all the stories of Germany's military preparations. We cannot stop them except by force and the Germans will always represent them as less than actual full scale and dress manoeuvres and as indispensable to the efficiency of the military machine. The important thing, in my opinion, is to get a pronouncement out of Lord Runciman before the Nuremberg Party Congress, which should, I believe, begin on September 5th, though the date has not yet been announced. Admiral Horthy comes here on August 21st and will I believe be ten days in the country altogether. What his Minister for War will fix up with the German General Staff is a big question.

Germany does not want war this year; that is my definite opinion, for what it is worth, and we should treat with them on that basis and not on that of the fear that they may treat it. My appreciation of the situation is that the more rest and holiday you and the Prime Minister take now the better. Lord Runciman and in a small way myself must do the work this month, and if there is to be a tug-of-war, it will come in September.

Yours ever,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

Forgive a scrawl but I have written this in haste so that Ogilvie-Forbes can take it to London with him.

N. H.

No. 591

*Letter from Dr. von Dirksen to Mr. Neville Chamberlain*

[C 7577/1941/18]

GRÖDITZBERG, KREIS GOLDBERG, SCHLESIEN, August 7, 1938

*Private and Personal.*

My dear Prime Minister,

I thank you very much for your kind letter<sup>1</sup> of August 3rd concerning the Czechoslovak question and the mission of Lord Runciman to Prague. Though I had not the pleasure of meeting Lord Runciman during my stay in London I am convinced that he has all the qualities needed in the difficult task which he has undertaken.

Before leaving Berlin yesterday I had a long talk with Herr von Ribbentrop. I shall see the Chancellor Hitler next week in Berchtesgaden who was up to now in Bayreuth and stayed only a few hours in Berlin. As I am going in a few days for a cure to Bad Reichenhall which is in the vicinity of Berchtesgaden I shall have full opportunity to speak to him and give him further details concerning the points we covered in our conversation.

Yours sincerely,

VON DIRKSEN

<sup>1</sup> No. 574.

No. 592

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 309 Telegraphic [C 7892/65/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *August 8, 1938*

We have not yet consulted the French Government regarding the implications of the proposed German mobilization measures referred to in your telegram No. 361 Saving<sup>1</sup> of 3rd August and Military Attaché's report, but we have been struck by the fact that the French for their part have not approached us on the subject of the German Government's plans. We shall be glad to learn whether you have discussed the matter with your French colleague and whether you have received any indication of the nature of the reports he has sent to his Government on the subject.

Repeated to Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 573.

No. 593

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received August 9)*

*No. 839 [C 8089/65/18]*

BERLIN, *August 8, 1938*

My Lord,

I have the honour to transmit to your Lordship herewith a despatch addressed to me by the Military Attaché to this Embassy surveying the situation created by the German decision to carry out the partial mobilisation of a number of divisions during the coming manœuvres season. I would commend Colonel Mason-MacFarlane's appreciation of the position to your Lordship's serious attention.

I have, &c.,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

ENCLOSURE IN No. 593

*Colonel Mason-MacFarlane to Sir N. Henderson*

(No. 7.)

BERLIN, *August 8, 1938*

Sir,

In view of the large scale on which the German army is proposing to employ reservists during the coming collective training season, and of the extent to which they are apparently intending to bring formations involved up to something like war strength, I have the honour to submit my views on the measures with which we are likely to be faced. I wish to emphasise from the outset that we must never fail to bear in mind the fact that the Germans may well make use of the publicity which they are giving to their

very comprehensive intentions to camouflage something on an even more serious scale.

2. As far as my information goes, the Germans intend to confine their 'exercises' to a maximum of seven or eight divisions in the former Third Reich and to a minimum of five divisions in Austria.

3. In the former case, I have been assured that the divisions selected will, as far as possible, be in different army corps areas. We know that the 1st and 11th Divisions will be carrying out manoeuvres in East Prussia. The military attachés have been invited to these manoeuvres, and I am by no means certain that they will be included in the seven or eight divisions which are to undertake 'partial mobilisation'.

4. We must therefore be prepared for 'partial mobilisation' as regards one division in each of from seven to eight army corps areas. Exclusive of East Prussia, there are twelve such areas. It seems most unlikely that any of the four corps on the western front will be selected. We may, therefore, have this process of 'mobilisation' going on in all the remaining areas, which will thus include the four corps areas marching with Czechoslovakia.

5. There appears to be little doubt but that the process of 'partial mobilisation' will include the following:—

(a) Bringing up to strength the active divisions involved.

(b) Embodiment of the reserve formations, or at least of a considerable number of reserve units in each of these divisional areas.

6. In this latter respect the maximum we can anticipate is the embodiment of one reserve division and of one Landwehr division in each case. I am by no means certain that this maximum will be attempted, and think it likely that the programme will be less ambitious.

7. It is, however, clear that even if the programme falls short of the maximum which I have mentioned, we shall in all probability be confronted with the calling up of reservists on a large scale, with the impressment of motor transport and with many other manifestations of mobilisation activity pretty well throughout the whole country. Even if formations in the four western corps areas are not directly affected, these areas may well be called upon to supply at any rate a small quota of requirements.

8. As regards Austria, the declared intention of the German high command appears to be to carry out 'partial mobilisation' throughout the country. As far as we know, the active formations concerned are two army corps comprising two infantry and two mountain divisions respectively, and one light division. It is obviously a case of flying very high to attempt to carry out an operation of this sort within six months of the 'Anschluss'. The German War Office have frankly admitted that they expect that the test will serve mainly to show up how very far from perfectly the Austrian military machine is as yet running.

9. We are still short of information as to the progress that has been made as regards rearmament and reorganisation of Austria, and as to the extent to which it has been possible to bring the whole reserve situation in Austria in line with that of Germany proper. I very much doubt if it will be possible

to attempt the 'mobilisation' of more than the active formations and of a maximum of one reserve division and one Landwehr division in each of the two corps areas.

10. The fact remains that the mobilisation machine will be set in motion throughout the country, and that thus in every corps area in Greater Germany having a mutual boundary with Czechoslovakia 'mobilisation' may be intended.

11. I have already stressed more than once the two great dangers which may result from these intentions on the part of the German high command. They may evoke counter-mobilisation on the part of at least Czechoslovakia, or, alternatively, they may tempt the German Government to profit by a state of military preparedness seldom attained in peace.

12. My object in writing this despatch has been to indicate, as well as the information at my disposal permits, the nature and the scope of what the Germans apparently intend to do, so that we may be the better able to appreciate at its proper value the flood of information with which we are certain to be inundated at an early date.

13. The best that we can hope for is that the Germans will indeed—as they have already foreshadowed—spread their operation over a considerable period, and that they will also adhere to their declared intention of concentrating each active division with its relevant reserve formations or units at its own 'Truppenübungsplatz' (training ground). This latter arrangement may serve to help us to keep track of what is afoot better than if more numerous concentrations were contemplated.

I have, &c.,

F. N. MASON-MACFARLANE  
*Colonel, Military Attaché.*

No. 594

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson to Viscount Halifax*

[C 11048/1941/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *August 8, 1938*

My dear Secretary of State,

I have written you many letters and I sometimes fear that I repeat myself too much.

The omens of the storm are rolling up in Germany and we must expect the rumours, particularly military, to be crescendo. I still cling to my belief that Hitler wants a peaceful solution; but he will not wait indefinitely. We cannot say that we have not been warned to that effect. Three dreary months have we all waited while Benes laboriously produced his new Minority Statute. Believe me I am not blind either to his difficulties or to the wider European considerations, but it is heartrending to watch him playing Germany's game, thinking that he is gaining time when he is losing it and gambling on British lives being squandered for Czechs and Sudeten. The

whole problem is a *racial* and national one and can only be solved on that basis. It is sheer waste of time to argue now about strategical considerations, historical frontiers or economic difficulties etc. We did all that in 1919 and it has failed.

The atmosphere of Germany is electric with stories of every description, and it is impossible to know exactly what is passing. It is, however, certain that Benes' delays have greatly helped the extremists, Himmler and Ribbentrop and possibly Göring; and it is more than probable that they have induced Hitler to fix a time-limit for his waiting for the peaceful solution. The frenzied activity on the Siegfried line and the military manoeuvres in September cannot but make one believe that the Nuremberg Rally constitutes that time-limit. Then will be his counter to the check of May 21st, if we do not forestall it.

The Runciman mission has provided a respite but I am not sure that it was not one which the Germans themselves welcomed because they will be readier in September than they would have been this month. But the sands are running out and Lord Runciman cannot afford to wait. There is no need for a pronouncement on detail but there is for an early one on principle. It is what Benes should have done three months ago and spared the world all this anxiety. But he had his opposition and his public to consider while Lord Runciman has not. So the sooner he comes out with the big line the better. Moreover if there is to be an agreed solution—and peace—it must be on Home Rule lines. The Sudeten will accept nothing less and Hitler will *never* ask them to accept anything less. It will be pure waste of time asking him to do so. That I can assure you with confidence, however little else I can assert confidently. He may not even accept that, though my firm belief is that he will. He may even not make war this time if we insist on the Sudeten taking less than Home Rule. But it will merely mean postponing the evil day and the most Pyrrhic of victories.

Two or three months ago I wrote you that the three dangers to the peace of Europe were: an incident, Ribbentrop and Benes. I know Benes' powers of persuasiveness and plausibility. His arguments may convince the rest of the world abroad but they will never convince the Sudeten at home or the Germans. I dread his powers in this respect as much as I dread German nationalism. I hate yielding to the latter but though it may be temporarily arrested—possibly at the price of European civilisation—it must in the end prevail.

I realise that I have been saying the same thing for months but I must say it again, even if it is for the last time. The problem is a racial one. Everything else, however weighty, is beside the real point. There can be no peaceable solution by negotiation except on the basis of Home Rule and a genuine State of Nationalities. No camouflaged Minority Law, however excellent in itself, has the faintest prospect of success. And there is no more time to be lost: we have been playing with the powder barrel too long as it is. No one can expect Lord Runciman to come out with a cut and dried scheme at a moment's notice. But he could establish the bases and make them quite

clear in a fortnight: and that is what, in my opinion, he should do. The detailed scheme could then be spread over a long period. I do not wish to be dogmatic about tactics but I am far too convinced of the rightness of the general line to pretend to be anything else. And there is too much at stake. The Sudeten problem is a major operation and no half measures will avail.

Yours ever,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

P.S. Colonel Mason-MacFarlane is taking this with him to London. He is going to talk over the military situation at the War Office.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A second short postscript, containing a personal reference, is here omitted.

No. 595

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received August 12)*

*No. 838 [C 8173/65/18]*

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *August 8, 1938*

His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin presents his compliments to H.M. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit to him the under-mentioned memorandum from the Military Attaché.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 595

391/21/38  
*The Ambassador.*

BERLIN, *August 7, 1938*

Rittmeister a. D. Viktor von Koerber, late of the 2nd Leibhusaren, called on me yesterday with an introduction from Major General Pohl, late Austrian Military Attaché in Berlin. (He tells me that, contrary to assurances which I have received from the Attaché Gruppe, he believes General Pohl to be in prison.)

Von Koerber lunched with me today and gave me his views on the present situation. He has had a varied career and was at one time, according to his story, a close supporter of Herr Hitler's. He is 47 years old. He took part in the Putsch of 1923 and has a Partei Ausweis showing his Party Number as being in the 11000s. He spent the bulk of 1923 in Paris endeavouring to further Franco-German cooperation. He showed me articles written by him in the 'Wiener Journal' and in the 'Vossische Zeitung' in 1930 which endeavoured to show that National Socialism was a movement of the Left in many ways analogous to the Communism it pretended to combat. He claimed that he travels continually all over Germany and that he has any number of friends and acquaintances in the Army. He also claimed to be an intimate friend of the Crown Prince's.

He is entirely convinced that war in September has already been decided



upon by Herr Hitler and his intimate advisers. He says that Göring, Himmeler and Ribbentrop are determined on war this autumn, and that General Keitel is 100 per cent. on their side. Neurath and Schacht have faded completely out of the picture. Weizsäcker counts for nothing. Brauchitsch is powerless. Admiral Raeder is entirely Hitler's man. He anticipates that Göring may be made Oberbefehlshaber der Wehrmacht and that Reichenau may replace Brauchitsch much sooner than most people might deem probable. (I have already given it as my opinion that both these appointments might be anticipated, but at a later date.)

His friends in high positions in the Army, including some who deal with war economics, assure him that Germany is not at present capable of waging a major war for more than from 6 weeks to 2 months.

He is now, or pretends to be, rabidly anti-Hitler. He considers that opposition to Herr Hitler and the Party has increased to an almost unbelievable extent in the course of the past few months. Most of this opposition is due to the inhuman treatment of the Jews, to religious persecution, to the virtual conscription of labour, to the general condition of life in Germany under the Party, and above all to the conviction that everything is inevitably leading to another war.

In his opinion war cannot be avoided except through the overthrow of the Hitler regime from within. Time is very short but feeling in the country is ripe for revolution, and reactionary organisations exist and flourish to a far greater extent than is generally known. This is particularly the case outside Prussia, in Bavaria, Saxony and Austria. The Stahlhelm especially is by no means a dead concern. The 'Green Police' would be only too ready to fight the Party. The only colours under which revolution can successfully be attempted are the Black, White and Red. A Restoration under the Crown Prince is by no means to be excluded. It would find a very great deal of backing.

If a European calamity is to be averted action must be taken immediately and an organisation set up abroad by which the necessary preparations can be made. He went on to talk rather wildly of aeroplanes, pamphlets and the provision of arms.

He was most emphatic on the subject of Spain. In his opinion a complete Franco victory would spell the death knell of England and France, unless England should succeed in 'buying off' Italy. It would never be possible to buy off Franco so long as Germany and Italy hung together.

He described the German Army at the moment as being 'vollkommen untauglich'.<sup>1</sup> It was almost impossible to give a general verdict on the attitude of the Army to the Party. Matters varied enormously locally. (This has also been my opinion.) In a few cases the Army and the Party worked well together, inwardly as well as outwardly. In others, there was no cooperation at all. In most, there was outward collaboration and inward hostility. The fact remained that the atmosphere of the officers' messes and casinos [*sic*]<sup>2</sup> was

<sup>1</sup> 'entirely unfit' (for war).

<sup>2</sup> i.e. Kasino, a German term for an officers' mess, or club.

impossible. Mistrust was rampant in most places, and officers were terrified of opening their mouths on any political subjects. (I should describe this as being exaggerated.)

He gave it as his opinion that the Army was not yet ready for revolution. It was working up to a peak moment in this respect after which inevitably, if Herr Hitler remained in power, its preparedness for revolution would wane. Unless something drastic occurred before the end of September, the Army would march at Hitler's behest and nothing could avert calamity. The Army as well as the people must be saturated with propaganda at once. 'L'Armée n'était pas encore le peuple.'

I let him do most of the talking: explained to him that I was most interested in his appreciation of the present situation; and made it perfectly clear that if he thought he might succeed in enlisting me as a fellow conspirator he had made a complete mistake.

I think it quite possible that his statements regarding the German Government's intention to make war this autumn may be worthy of credence. He certainly spoke as if he had very close contacts with Herr Hitler's most intimate advisers.

As regards the prospects of being able to foster revolution in Germany from without as the only hope of averting catastrophe in Europe, I have often examined the question, but only on the lines of having something prepared to meet the eventuality of Herr Hitler's demise. I have torn up several tentative memoranda on the subject! That underground opposition to the Party exists; that this opposition has latterly grown; and that, as von Koerber says, it is better organized than we think, is quite possibly the case. But any bungling of an attempt to interfere from without with Germany's domestic politics during Hitler's lifetime would most assuredly lead to exactly what we all wish to avoid.

Von Koerber is coming to see me again next week.

F. N. MASON-MACFARLANE  
*Colonel, Military Attaché.*

## No. 596

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 9, 2.0 p.m.)*

*No. 354 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 8066/65/18]*

BERLIN, August 9, 1938

Your telegram No. 309.<sup>1</sup>

I have not discussed the question with French Ambassador as I would prefer not to repeat information given confidentially to Military Attaché by German War Office and do not desire repetition of stories spread last May that British sources were responsible for reports of German concentrations.

Military Attaché arrives in London today and will call at Foreign Office.

<sup>1</sup> No. 592.

I mentioned to Czechoslovak Minister yesterday that I foresaw difficult situation in September not only on account of intensive work being executed on Rhine fortifications but also of extensive calling up of reservists as foreshadowed in German press. There was no reaction as I believe Czech War Office anticipate trouble next spring rather than now.

I have been astonished myself that French Ambassador has not raised this question with me but I am seeing him this evening and will let you know what line he is taking. I shall however not mention German War Office's information as the press has been sufficiently explicit on the subject. Moreover as I fear there is no hope whatever of inducing German Government to modify plans already definitely decided upon—except so far as the Military Attaché and myself have possibly succeeded in doing so—I am loth to start any panicky campaign about these military measures which have been well ventilated in the press.

Repeated to Paris.

No. 597

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 10)

No. 356 Telegraphic [C 8408/65/18]

BERLIN, August 9, 1938

My telegram No. 354.<sup>1</sup>

I asked the French Ambassador today whether he and his Military Attaché were not perturbed about the German military measures announced in press particularly as regards the calling up of large numbers of reservists. He replied that he was very uneasy but did not pursue the subject. At a later stage of the conversation I accordingly asked the Ambassador whether he thought that there was any likelihood of French Government protesting against these unusual measures at this juncture. He replied that it would be quite useless since the German Government would merely retort that measures in question were indispensable part of normal autumn manoeuvres.

The Ambassador agreed with me that these measures combined with the intensification of work on Siegfried line, constituted a combination of bluff and intimidation (see my telegram No. 361<sup>2</sup> Saving). He referred to various rumours indicating determination of German Government to settle the Sudeten question before the winter. The Estonian Minister at Warsaw who is a close friend apparently of Colonel Beck and who passed through Berlin recently had, he said, asserted that the latter was convinced that Czechoslovak problem would be settled before Christmas. The Ambassador himself foresaw the end of September as the critical moment in the . . .<sup>3</sup> Herr Hitler had been checked because his army was not ready. The army would not be able to make the same excuse this time . . .<sup>3</sup> the rebuff would be wiped out.

I told His Excellency that in general I agreed with him except that I

<sup>1</sup> No. 596.

<sup>2</sup> No. 573.

<sup>3</sup> The text is here uncertain.

expected Herr Hitler's speeches at Nuremberg rally in the first fortnight of September to mark the starting point of the crisis, always provided that pacific solution acceptable to Sudeten and Germany had not been reached beforehand. The Ambassador's reply was that no solution would be acceptable unless it provided for genuine autonomy. According to him any pronouncement by Lord Runciman which fell short of the largest measure of home rule would serve no purpose whatsoever and that if Czechoslovak Government refused, the only alternative would be to insist on plebiscite. I drew his attention to the dangers of plebiscite which seemed to me measure only to be adopted in the last resort. The Ambassador recognised this but was insistent that autonomy or plebiscite constituted the only hope of peace.

Repeated to Paris.

## No. 598

### *Letter from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin to Mr. Strang* [C 8509/1941/18]

LORD RUNCIMAN'S MISSION, PRAGUE, *August 9, 1938*

Here is in brief the story of our first week. We arrived on Tuesday (August 2nd); Lord and Lady Runciman arrived the following day. His first public act was to receive the journalists (150 of them) in the lounge of the hotel (6 p.m.), and to make them a little speech in English, in which, quoting the words of John Wesley, he said he came as friend of all and enemy of none. It was rather a scrimmage, but the events of the first day were favourable, and I am sure a good impression was made. We are still front page news here, but the journalists assure me that this cannot last more than three or four days more. Great interest in us in both North and South America.

The next morning (August 4th) was given up to formal calls (our top-hats in sweltering heat impressed the populace—and ourselves) on the Foreign Minister, Prime Minister and President. In the afternoon (5 p.m.), the delegation of the Sudeten Deutsch Partei headed by Herr Kundt called to see Lord Runciman. They came back again in the evening at 8 p.m. and explained their point of view to us (Stopford, Peto and myself) until 2 a.m.

On August 5th Drs. Krofta and Hodza returned calls on Lord Runciman. He and Lady Runciman lunched with M. and Madame Benes. In the afternoon Dr. Jaksch of the German Social Democrat Party called on Lord Runciman.

On Saturday (August 6th) Herr Kundt and his retainers called for another talk with us that lasted from 2 to 5 p.m. Then Stopford and I went with Basil Newton for a bathe in the Elbe and dinner in an enchanted castle at a place called Melnik, where the Elbe and Moldau meet—full-moon on the water, mushrooms and cream.

On Sunday Basil motored me to Karlsbad to lunch with the Max Müllers and to dine on the way back with Count and Countess Larisch (he owns the

coal mines on the Polish border, and is very gloomy because his state contracts in Austria have been cancelled since the 'Anschluss').

On Monday (August 8th), Lord Runciman returned from his weekend visit to Count Raa Kinsky's castle in Moravia.<sup>1</sup> No special interviews. But we have a lot of documentary work to do.

On Tuesday (August 9th) we shall see the Sudeten Deutsch Party people again and probably a meeting between Lord Runciman and Henlein will be arranged.

On Wednesday (August 10th), I am lunching with two of the principal members of the Czech Parliamentary Committee, who are to negotiate with the S.D.P.—Drs. Meissner and Rasin. After that, I may be able to see a little more clearly what the prospects are.

At present, I understand that we must stay here anyhow until the end of September—as a moral influence standing guard over this country and the peace of Europe!

During that time, we are to try to build a bridge over what Herr Kundt calls 'die grosse Kluft' between his ideas and those of the Czech authorities.

This Kluft is as deep and deeper than the gulf between England and the Irish republicans at its worst; and there is the complication of outside influences. There is the utmost mistrust, a feeling of the imminence of the zero hour, and a fatalistic carelessness about its consequences when it does strike. People are much less squeamish here about war and its terrors than they are in more civilised lands.

I don't think either side will sacrifice much just to keep the peace of Europe.

I don't think the Sudeten Germans will retreat much from their present demands. They are in a very good bargaining—or blackmailing—position.

I think that any considerable sacrifice on the Czech side (and only by considerable sacrifice can they buy a—perhaps temporary—settlement) may split the Czech nation and lead to revolution and dictatorship, especially if economic conditions get much worse as a result of German pressure.

As for ourselves, can we usefully arbitrate or mediate, not in mid-Atlantic, as Lord Runciman said, but on the edge of Niagara? We can serve a useful purpose (nothing to do with mediation) until about the end of September. Then, unless a miracle has happened, our task will be to extricate ourselves peacefully—to fade out, like the van Zeeland Plan!

I am sorry to start on so poor-spirited a note. Perhaps next week, I can send you a brisker message; I hope so, anyhow.

You may make what use you wish of these letters, on the condition that they are regarded as private letters from me to you and not as in any way official.

Lord Runciman is writing, very fully and freely he tells me, to the Secretary of State, but I have not seen what he has written. You will doubtless have this advantage and will be able to compare his wise words with this trivial commentary.

<sup>1</sup> i.e. Count Zdenko Kinsky's castle at Zdar.

No. 599

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Campbell (Paris)*  
*No. 240 Telegraphic [C 8068/65/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, August 10, 1938, 12.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 208<sup>1</sup> of August 9.

Without disclosing the source of the Military Attaché's information or revealing at present all the apprehensions which we feel on the score of the German military measures (see paragraph 1 of Berlin telegram No. 354)<sup>2</sup> you might ask Minister for Foreign Affairs as from yourself whether he has any information about the scope of the proposed manoeuvres which are mentioned in an article in the 'Völkischer Beobachter' of August 5.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. In this telegram Mr. Campbell asked whether he should raise the question referred to above when he saw M. Bonnet in the afternoon of August 10.

<sup>2</sup> No. 596.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Campbell telegraphed on the night of August 10-11 that M. Bonnet did not know of the article, but that he would make inquiries and give Mr. Campbell any information in possession of the French Government about the scope of the proposed German manoeuvres. M. Bonnet did not follow up the subject in his conversation.

No. 600

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*  
*No. 311 Telegraphic [C 8066/65/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, August 10, 1938, 5.30 p.m.

Following for Steel<sup>1</sup> from Mallet:—

Berlin telegram No. 354<sup>2</sup> last paragraph.

We should be grateful if you would telegraph summary of any articles which have appeared in the German press about the proposed military measures in addition to that summarised in Berlin telegram No. 369 Saving.<sup>3</sup> We want to know how much publicity has been given to these measures.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Steel was Second Secretary at H.M. Embassy in Berlin.

<sup>2</sup> No. 596.

<sup>3</sup> No. 585.

No. 601

*Mr. Campbell (Paris) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received August 11)*  
*No. 505 Saving: Telegraphic [C 8128/1941/18]*

PARIS, August 10, 1938

Sir E. Phipps' telegram No. 399 Saving.<sup>1</sup>

I told the Minister for Foreign Affairs that His Majesty's Government were anxious as soon as possible to hear his views on the suggestions put

<sup>1</sup> No. 429 in Volume I of this Series.

forward by His Majesty's Government for the remodelling of Czechoslovakia's treaty relations, and spoke to him in the sense suggested in the first two sentences of the last paragraph of Sir Orme Sargent's letter<sup>2</sup> of August 6 to me.

M. Bonnet spoke on the subject at some length. He said he could only reiterate what he had said to you in Paris to the effect that he did not much like the idea of our proposals and that a discussion of them would be inopportune. He read out instructions sent to the French Ambassador on the subject of the Runciman mission and M. Corbin's reply after conversation with you (see your despatch No. 1675<sup>3</sup> of July 28). He thought Lord Runciman's mission should be confined strictly to the solution of the Sudeten question alone. Once the mission was concluded we could see what should be the next move. He had considered the mission as a great step forward. It was an advance from the German position that the Sudeten question was one entirely between the Czechoslovak Government and Herr Henlein's party, and if of any external interest, of interest to Germany only. There might be three results of the mission. Lord Runciman might secure an agreed solution when we could all rejoice. Or he might propose a fair solution which the Sudetens would accept but the Czechoslovak Government refuse; in that case we could say to the Czechoslovak Government, 'You have refused a fair proposal, you must now get out of your difficulties yourselves.' Or he might propose a solution which the Czech Government accepted but the Sudetens refused. We should then have to see, in the light of the circumstances of the moment, what we should do to avoid a crisis, but till then he thought it inopportune and dangerous to discuss what line we should adopt. It might be that we should have to propose the remodelling of Czechoslovakia's treaty relations or her neutralisation, but if we were to do it now, it would be certain to get known, as the publicity already received by the idea showed. The Germans, who always asked for more if one offered them something, would then open their mouths wider and the Sudetens would become more intransigent. The Sudetens had not yet asked for anything of this kind. It would be a pity and dangerous to be more royalist than the King and to put ideas into their heads. It was possible that we might have to come to some idea of neutralisation as a last resort, but we should only do it if we were really faced with the necessity of going to the utmost limits

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. In this letter Sir Orme Sargent wrote: 'We fully appreciate the reluctance of the Quai d'Orsay to come to any decision on this difficult question, but it is one with which we may be faced at any moment, not through any action of Lord Runciman, but simply because the Germans undoubtedly will raise it at a moment convenient to themselves—possibly by way of compensation in return for their giving their support to a compromise solution of the Sudeten problem. We shall be in a much better position to deal with such a proposal if we have cleared our minds in advance in consultation with the French, who have now had since the 18th June to consider the suggestions put forward in our Saving telegram No. 147 [see Volume I of this Series, No. 421]. We should therefore be glad if you would take a suitable opportunity to remind M. Bonnet that we should like to have his considered views as soon as possible and if you would continue to jog his memory discreetly, should there be any further delay.'

<sup>3</sup> No. 557.

to avoid a catastrophe and, for the reasons he had given, we should not discuss the possibility even amongst ourselves until that situation was reached. Furthermore, he must (as he was accustomed to be frank with us) emphasise that the proposals of His Majesty's Government had various serious disadvantages from the point of view of French public opinion, to whom he would find it difficult to present in a convincing or palatable form a proposal which meant that while the French and the Russians were left to guarantee Czechoslovakia, His Majesty's Government launched them out on a rather precarious voyage merely with their blessing. To justify to the French public the renunciation of Czechoslovak assistance (even though well-informed Frenchmen might realise that it had not any very great value for France), something more positive would be required from His Majesty's Government than this negative attitude. It might be possible that French opinion would in the course of time accept something of the kind proposed by His Majesty's Government if events showed that it was essential for appeasement, and if their development made it appear in French eyes as the final point to the work of appeasement.

The above gives the gist of M. Bonnet's remarks during a lengthy conversation. I pointed out that what His Majesty's Government were anxious to do was to clear their minds, in consultation with the French, with regard to the attitude they should adopt towards a German move for the modification of Czech foreign relations. The Germans might raise the question at any moment. The proposals of His Majesty's Government were not necessarily directly connected with Lord Runciman's mission or with the Sudeten problem. They dealt with a question which might arise, if it did not arise sooner, immediately after even a successful solution of the Sudeten question. It might become clear that the treaty relations of Czechoslovakia remained a constant source of irritation to the Germans and that the European situation would for that reason remain in a state of high tension. It would be with a view to meeting such a situation and in order to avoid being caught unawares that His Majesty's Government had wished to know the views of the French Government as quickly as possible. If the French Government saw objections to the suggestions made by His Majesty's Government, had they considered, or would they consider and make known to His Majesty's Government the means which seemed to the French Government themselves adapted to meeting this situation? But M. Bonnet reiterated his view that we should not try to cross this bridge until we came to it, and that we should rather let Lord Runciman's mission take its course and see how matters were developing. If he were asked at this moment to state his views on the suggestions of His Majesty's Government, he would have to say that they were definitely unfavourable. As, however, he had already remarked, events might force us later on to contemplate something of the kind. Till then he was strongly opposed to discussion of the matter.

I was unable by explanation or argument to move M. Bonnet from this opinion or from his dealing with our proposals in connexion with the Runciman mission. He did, however, say that we might talk together on the subject



again in say a fortnight's time. I have little hope, however, that, unless events take a hand, M. Bonnet, who spoke with emphasis, will have altered his views in the interval and I doubt whether it would be useful or very wise to return to the charge for the moment.

No. 602

*Letter from Viscount Runciman to Viscount Halifax*

[C 8510/1941/18]

LORD RUNCIMAN'S MISSION, PRAGUE, August 10, 1938

As you may have seen in 'The Times' we have spent each day in extracting from the Sudeten Deutsche Partei delegation a precise version of their demands and from the Government a statement of the proposals which they are laying in two Bills. They are a long way apart. Indeed yesterday's conference very nearly began with a breakdown on the nominations for the Government negotiation delegation. The question put to me was concerned with the absence of responsibility from this Delegation although they are selected by the Government. This was a new problem and I had to steer round this prime difficulty warily. Anyhow we have the formal statements of the two sides, are working on them and trying to induce the two sides to recognize some common ground. The staff here are working hard and making many wise suggestions. Gwatkin, Stopford and Geoffrey Peto are well supported in reducing the demands (and replies) to order. Meantime I have long conferences with the chief persons concerned, including the President, Benes, and his Prime Minister and the principal Cabinet Ministers, as well as the Cardinal Archbishop and others. I am already tired of the dinners!

Where are we going? The answer can be given as well by you as by me. Success depends on whether or not the Führer wants to go to war. If he does the excuse will be found easily. In any case I can only continue my labours and hope for the best in good faith. It is a pathetic side of the present crisis that the common people here, and, I am told, elsewhere are looking to me and my mission as the only hope for an established peace. Alas, they do not realise how weak are our sanctions, and I dread the moment when they find that nothing can save them. It will be a terrible disillusionment for them. The Czech Government and their President show no sign of fear or nervousness, and the fabric here is of sterner stuff than was set up in Austria, but 17,000,000 cannot hold out long against 70,000,000. The only weak spot is in the predominantly German quarters where the leaning of a few tends to decompose the cooperation of a completely or what ought to be a completely united nation.

If on writing me you can tell me how long in your opinion I ought to hold the fort I would be grateful. I presume that we shall get some warning of active steps being prepared or taken by Germany, for once hostilities have broken out I can be of no further use out here.

Yours ever,  
WALTER R.

Curiously enough Henlein has not been seen, although he must be somewhere in Czechoslovakia. I am of course more than ready to talk with him.

Today Benes promised me that he would soon issue his statement about throwing open the state appointments to a more than proportionate degree in each branch of the public services. A few posts selected as the samples of generous nominations for the future would have a marked effect in some quarters, as I have seen for myself.

No. 603

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 11, 2.5 p.m.)

*No. 427 Telegraphic [C 8169/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 11, 1938, 11.53 a.m.

Following for Mr. Strang from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin:—

Work of mission which has up to now been confined mainly to making contacts and collecting information struck its first obstacle on August 9. Whereas Dr. Hodza explained to Lord Runciman that afternoon that he was prepared to proceed at once with negotiations between Committee of Six Deputies and the Sudeten Delegation as indicated in my minute of August 8<sup>1</sup> (copy of which was sent by bag) Sudeten Delegation whom Lord Runciman saw later in the day flatly refused to negotiate with any Parliamentary Committee or with any body other than Political Council of the Cabinet. They also demurred at opening negotiations until they had received:

(a) Government answer to their proposals of June 7—not June 17 as in my minute, and (b) Government proposals in a complete form.

2. Sudeten objections to the Committee of Six are:

(1). In principle that they must negotiate with the Government and not with Political Parties:

(2). That it is waste of time since Parliamentary Committee could take no decision but would have to refer to Government and then negotiations would have to start over again:

(3). That personalities chosen for Committee of Six are such that if they did meet then 'complete breakdown would ensue within three hours'. Sudeten Delegation regard Committee of Six's proposal as manoeuvre of Dr. Hodza to meet Parliamentary criticism of his earlier personal efforts to make some progress towards satisfying their people.

3. Two members of the Committee of Six whom I saw on August 10 expressed surprise at this change of attitude which was contrary to their own impression of readiness of the Sudeten Delegation to open discussions with them. They considered changed attitude was attributable to consideration of prestige and perhaps due to instructions from Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This minute gave details of the membership of the Committee of Six Deputies and of the Sudeten delegation and the basis of discussion proposed by the former.

4. At meeting with the Sudeten Delegation on August 9 Lord Runciman expressed no opinion on their stand regarding the procedure but later he passed on their views to the President of the Council; and on August 10 he saw the President who had meanwhile informed Dr. Hodza and who said that they were carefully considering the situation.

5. President also expressed his readiness as a conciliatory gesture to take immediate unilateral action to improve present situation in regard to employment of Germans in the Government service.

No. 604

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 312 Telegraphic [C 7892/65/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, August 11, 1938, 5.15 p.m.

I have asked your Military Attaché to return to Berlin where he is due 4 p.m. August 12 to take you an urgent despatch.<sup>1</sup> Having been present at two discussions in my room he will be able to give you full explanation of considerations on which instructions are based. I must then ask you to be in Berlin to have a talk with him and to act on instructions forthwith as time factor is a great consideration.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No. 608.

<sup>2</sup> On August 12 Sir N. Henderson telegraphed that 'if instructions are on the lines I anticipate I cannot too strongly urge the necessity for absolute secrecy in the press or elsewhere as to their nature. The least indiscretion in this respect is calculated to eliminate the faintest hope of their producing any effect. Nor would I recommend that the French Government be informed of them.' Sir N. Henderson was told that Lord Halifax shared his view, and was, for this reason, saying nothing at present to the French Government.

No. 605

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received August 12, 9.30 a.m.)*

*No. 429 Telegraphic [C 8192/65/18]*

PRAGUE, August 11, 1938, 6.35 p.m.

At dinner last night the Minister for Foreign Affairs told me the following story which had been reported from Czechoslovak Legation at Berlin. Dr. Krofta did not take it too seriously but equally did not wish to ignore it saying that the source had on other occasions proved reliable.

2. About July 15 Herr Hitler had presided over a meeting of the party and military leaders and said that on May 21 Germany had suffered a rebuff which must be made good. It was decided against the advice of the army but with the concurrence of Field-Marshal Göring to take action by the end of September. It was recognised that result might be unfavourable for Germany if France and Great Britain intervened. Some confidence was however

expressed that Great Britain could be kept neutral and it was hoped that France could be deterred from effective action by some threat to her own security. When it was observed that this might not be easy Herr Hitler is reported to have said that it was a matter for Dr. Goebbels to arrange. Successful action by Germany would be followed by a partition of Czechoslovakia.

3. I cannot help wondering whether this communication, if not the story itself, is intended to keep His Majesty's Government up to the mark in maintenance of their interest in Czechoslovakia. For in reply to my enquiry whether Sir N. Henderson had been informed in Berlin Dr. Krofta told me that he understood that the story had been communicated to the Prime Minister through some channel which he did not specify.

**No. 606**

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 11, 1938, 10.0 p.m.)  
*No. 357 Telegraphic [C 8195/65/18]*

BERLIN, August 11, 1938, 7.22 p.m.

Your telegram No. 311.<sup>1</sup>

Following for Mallet from Mr. Steel.

The gist of article in 'Deutsche Wehr' has been reproduced either textually or in summary in a number of newspapers all over the country. Attention has however not been focussed on proposed measures in any way and there is obviously anxiety to represent them as normal and natural military procedure.

We are inclined to think that the principal newspapers will not devote any further attention to the matter until a date for the beginning of exercise is announced.

My telegram No. 383 Saving<sup>2</sup> contains summary of a rather vague article in 'Börsen Zeitung' which appeared on July 27.

<sup>1</sup> No. 600.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed.

**No. 607**

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 222 Telegraphic [C 7901/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, August 11, 1938, 10.0 p.m.

Paris telegram No. 495 Saving<sup>1</sup> and paragraphs 5 and 6 of enclosure in my despatch No. 413.<sup>2</sup>

(1) I presume Lord Runciman will keep you fully informed and I shall be glad if you will pass on to your French colleague such information about

<sup>1</sup> No. 572.

<sup>2</sup> This despatch enclosed the notes of a conversation with the French Ambassador reported in No. 557.

the progress of his discussions as you consider suitable for communication to the French Government.

(2) Please record in any telegram reporting on the progress of the mission whether you have communicated its substance to M. de Lacroix.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

No. 608

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 1317 [C 7892/65/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *August 11, 1938*

Sir,

After considering the information which you have furnished me in recent telegrams and despatches regarding the provocative military measures which the German Government propose to take in the immediate future, and in view of other information in my possession, I have decided that, notwithstanding the views expressed in the penultimate paragraph of your Excellency's telegram No. 361, Saving,<sup>1</sup> the moment has come to make a direct appeal to Herr Hitler to modify his military measures in such a manner that they will not further increase the already dangerous tension in Europe.

2. I have decided, in view of the publicity which would necessarily attach to a visit paid by you to Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden or elsewhere, that the best method of making this communication to the Chancellor will be for you to arrange for a copy (and a German translation, if you consider it desirable) of the enclosed memorandum to be conveyed to him direct through his Chancery under a suitable covering letter from yourself. It is essential, however, to ensure that the memorandum should reach the Chancellor at the earliest possible date.

3. After despatching the memorandum you should send a copy to Herr von Ribbentrop for his information, and you will no doubt consider the advisability of informing the Chancellor that you hold yourself at his disposal in the event of his wishing to discuss the contents of the memorandum with you personally.

I am, &c.,

HALIFAX

<sup>1</sup> No. 573.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 608

*Memorandum communicated to His Majesty's Ambassador, Berlin,  
for transmission to Herr Hitler*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *August 11, 1938*

The Prime Minister and I have been reflecting upon the conversation which I had with Captain Wiedemann<sup>1</sup> last month, with particular reference to the steps which the German and British Governments might be able to

<sup>1</sup> See Volume I of this Series, No. 510.

take, not merely to ensure the best possible relations between their two countries, but also to bring about such an appeasement of the international situation as would make for an all-round economic and political improvement. We have realised, as we feel sure the German Chancellor must, that progress on these lines is hindered by the present state of tension that surrounds the Czechoslovak question.

As the German Chancellor will be aware, we have recognised that there is a real problem here. He will know, too, that we have not been concerned to express any opinion as to the lines upon which the question ought to be settled. Our interest in the subject is based upon our conviction that it is a potential source of danger to European peace, and we have been anxious to assist in finding a peaceful solution. Accordingly, we have consistently exercised our influence at Prague to facilitate the early discovery of such a solution which, of course, must be one to give satisfaction to the legitimate aspirations of the Sudeten section of the population. Lord Runciman's mission as an independent investigator and mediator will, we hope, prove what it was intended to be, namely, a practical and effective factor in enabling such a solution to be arrived at, and we were particularly pleased to note that Lord Runciman received a warm welcome from all parties in Czechoslovakia. The fact that this mission was made the subject of no hostile comment in Germany had encouraged us in the view we had already formed from my conversation with the German Chancellor last year, and from what Captain Wiedemann had said to me quite recently, that Herr Hitler, like His Majesty's Government, desired to see the Czechoslovak question settled appropriately, but by peaceful and amicable methods.

This hopeful attitude on our part has been shaken recently by the behaviour of the German press, which, as it seems to us, has been going out of its way to whip up public opinion to a state of dangerous exasperation over every incident, occurring either in Czechoslovakia or on the frontier.

On the top of this, and following upon the decision to complete the system of western fortifications in the shortest possible time, comes the news that it is intended to bring an unusual number of formations of the German army up to war strength for special training next month and to prolong thereafter the service of men who would normally be released. Although the British Military Attaché has been very courteously informed of these measures, he has not been given any explanation of their necessity at this particular juncture, other than that they are intended to test the efficiency of the war organisation.

Our comment on this must be that such abnormal and unusual efforts made at such a moment cannot fail to be interpreted as a threatening gesture towards Czechoslovakia. In our view they will be bound to increase the feeling of tension throughout Europe generally and may well lead to such a deterioration in the situation as might compel the Czechoslovak Government to regard themselves as menaced, and to feel impelled, therefore, for their part, to take whatever precautionary measures may be open to them. The result of all this upon the Runciman Mission could hardly fail to be

disastrous. The almost certain consequence would be that all chance of successful mediation would be destroyed and the efforts of the British Government to find a peaceful solution would be brought to naught. A situation might rapidly arise in which—to quote the words I used in my letter of the 28th July<sup>2</sup> to Herr von Ribbentrop—‘It is no exaggeration to say that the peace of every one of the Great Powers of Europe might be endangered.’

We have no doubt that some, at any rate, of these considerations must be in the mind of the German Chancellor, and that he has taken his decisions for reasons that seem to him good.

Yet we do not hesitate to ask him to consider again whether it is really necessary to run such grave and incalculable risks, and, incidentally, to endanger and perhaps even destroy the prospects of a resumption before long of the conversations between our two Governments.

So far as we know, no irrevocable steps have yet been taken, and we therefore would appeal to Herr Hitler not to do anything which might sterilise Lord Runciman’s mission and prematurely and unnecessarily create a fresh crisis in Europe. It seems to us that it should be possible for the Chancellor so to modify his military measures as to avoid the dangers that we foresee, and we would accordingly urge him with all possible earnestness to take this course.

HALIFAX

<sup>2</sup> No. 556.

No. 609

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 12, 3.45 p.m.)

No. 431 Telegraphic [C 8244/1941/18]

PRAGUE, August 12, 1938, 12.30 p.m.

My telegram 427.<sup>1</sup>

Following from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin for Mr. Strang:

Sudeten delegation told us yesterday August 11 that initial difficulty regarding procedure had been overcome. They were going to open discussions with Czechoslovak Government representatives at 5 p.m. that same afternoon. Prime Minister would preside at first meeting and afterwards if he were absent another Cabinet Minister. Representatives on Government side would include members of political committee of Cabinet and also other persons nominated by Government. Meetings would be held in a Government office and not in Parliamentary buildings.

Lord Runciman is to visit Prince Kinsky’s<sup>2</sup> estate in North Bohemia next Sunday and will there probably meet Herr Henlein. This proposal came from Sudeten delegation.

<sup>1</sup> No. 603.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. Prince Ulrich Kinsky.

## No. 610

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 13, 9.30 a.m.)  
*No. 436 Telegraphic [C 8262/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 12, 1938, 9.38 p.m.

The evening's press August 12 publishes the following extract from what it describes as a manifesto issued by the Officers' Association: 'We officers who are destined first to die assume the right to raise our voices in warning, fully conscious of our responsibility and determined by all means in our power to give effect to M. Masaryk's testament: the authority of the state must in no circumstances be curtailed, undermined or deposed. Not through a single act not through a single word. There must be no retreat from this position. In it we can live and work protecting ourselves and fight, we can die but we can give way no more. Not one step not one foot.' Foregoing is a bowdlerised translation of concluding passage of a declaration published in Association's journal of August 4. Declaration itself does not however say 'we officers' but 'They who are destined etc.'

Officers' Association is a voluntary and theoretically non-official body to which in effect all serving reserve and retired officers belong. President of the Republic is an honorary member and its objects are to foster interests of the Corps of Officers as a whole especially in such matters as pay and accommodation.

Military Attaché enquired today at the General Staff as to the significance of this declaration and they were at pains to belittle its importance pointing out that the Association is an unofficial body and that declaration essentially does not necessarily express views of the Corps of Officers. He was given to understand that some form of *démenti* might be issued tomorrow.

Nevertheless Military Attaché points out that Declaration passed the censorship at Ministry of Defence and that in view of the wide membership of the Association it may well express the view of officers of the army as a whole which tends to confirm his previously expressed opinion on the subject (see my despatch No. 276<sup>1</sup> paragraph 6).

Repeated to Berlin, Paris, Rome, and Warsaw.

<sup>1</sup> No. 567.

## No. 611

*Letter from Viscount Runciman to Viscount Halifax*  
*[C 8510/1941/18]*

LORD RUNCIMAN'S MISSION, PRAGUE, August 12, 1938

On this blessed date we have had our first real encouragement but it is very slender. The famous Henlein is not returning to Prague and is indeed resting in the forests after some hectic days with Hitler at Breslau.<sup>1</sup> I am to

<sup>1</sup> Herr Henlein, with a large party of Sudeten Germans, had been participating in the German National Gymnastic Festival at Breslau.



see him next Thursday and meantime I have had a long confidential talk with his deputy, Herr Franke [*sic*], who called to see me immediately on his return to Prague from which he has been absent for ten days. He said that he wanted to thank me for the way in which his Delegation had been received, to say that my staff had shown a real understanding of their case. Each day he had received, while he was out of town, a report on proceedings and all his Delegation as well as he himself appreciated what we had already accomplished, including our success in bringing in the Prime Minister.

We are on good terms, and finally at the end of this conversation (with him and me and our interpreter) he said 'I am not hopeful but I must tell you that we are making an effort to reach agreement. If settlement by agreement cannot be reached this time—then for us it is the last attempt.' We must not rely too much on this, and I cannot and I do not believe the thing is possible, but we have made progress.

The German Counsellor told Gwatkin today that his instructions were to keep clear of our negotiations. It was notable that both he and the Italian Chargé found reasons for not lunching at the Legation yesterday when Newton gathered together a large number of industrialists.

Yours ever,  
W. R.

No. 612

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Norton (Warsaw)*

*No. 356 [C 8175/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, August 12, 1938

Sir,

With reference to my despatch No. 318<sup>1</sup> of the 2nd August, I have to inform you that the Polish Chargé d'Affaires called on Sir Orme Sargent on the 9th August in connexion with the conversation he had had with Sir Alexander Cadogan on the 27th July regarding the Polish minority in Czechoslovakia. On that occasion he had asked that Lord Runciman should investigate the claims of this Polish minority and Sir Alexander had replied that Lord Runciman could only undertake this if invited to do so by the Czech Government and the Polish minority. This he had subsequently confirmed in a letter of the 30th July.

2. M. Jazdzewski now explained that he had made a mistake in supposing that the Polish Government wished Lord Runciman to act as mediator between the Czech Government and the Polish minority. All they wanted was that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom should tell the Czechoslovak Government that there must be no discrimination as between the treatment eventually accorded in any settlement to the Sudeten Germans and that accorded to the Polish minority. In making this request he was at

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This despatch transmitted the record of a conversation between Sir A. Cadogan and the Polish Chargé d'Affaires on July 27, in the sense indicated in the text.

pains to explain that the Polish Government were acting and wished to act quite independently of the German Government.

3. Sir Orme Sargent pointed out to M. Jazdzewski in reply that since Lord Runciman had taken over the task of bringing about a settlement of the Sudeten-Czech problem, His Majesty's Government had retired somewhat into the background and he did not think that they would wish at this juncture to intervene with either advice or warnings at Prague except in a grave emergency. Had the Polish Government any reason to suspect that the Czechoslovak Government intended discrimination against the Polish population should the Czechoslovak administration be reorganised as a result of a settlement with the Sudeten Germans? M. Jazdzewski could not say that they had any such evidence: on the contrary, it appeared that the Czechoslovak Government had recently given the Polish Government assurances on the point.

4. In these circumstances Sir Orme Sargent said that it seemed that it would be premature for His Majesty's Government to intervene in the matter. They had only a certain amount of influence in Prague and it was important to reserve this influence for use in immediate and serious cases. Meanwhile he felt sure that Lord Runciman was fully alive to the question of extending to the lesser minorities in Czechoslovakia any concessions made to the Sudeten Germans. In fact, M. Jazdzewski's original *démarche* of the 27th July had been brought to the attention of Lord Runciman and Sir Orme Sargent would see to it that he was equally informed of the present Polish enquiry.

I am, &c.,  
HALIFAX

No. 613

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
[C 11048/1941/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, August 12, 1938

Dear Secretary of State,

May I attempt to answer your letter of August 5th<sup>1</sup> paragraph by paragraph and give you my opinion for what it is worth on the points you raise? In case you may wish to refer to your letter, I have had a copy made and return it to you.

I doubt if Germany would actually go to war this year with Czechoslovakia if she was *certain* it meant British intervention. It might be a near thing but I think that Hitler's good sense would prevail. But Germany would yield with very bad grace and merely postpone action against Czechoslovakia till a more favourable occasion.

<sup>1</sup> No. 587.

Germany's full desiderata as regards the Sudeten are their ultimate incorporation in the Reich. But there is a moderate body of opinion which favours the policy of leaving the Sudeten where they are and Hitler is prepared in the interests of peace to accept a temporary solution, even if it has the faint chance of being permanent, so long as it gives him to-day a large measure of satisfaction. He will not willingly agree to anything less than real autonomy on the lines of the Swiss Federation and absolute equality of rights. Nothing that means the perpetuation of minority treatment will be accepted by him. Any plan falling short of the most complete autonomy in the districts in which Germans preponderate will be regarded as and declared to be worthless and, even if Germany does not intervene by force this year, the crisis will remain unsolved. If we ask the Germans to put up with less they will merely answer that they are already putting up with less than their rights by not asking for a plebiscite in accordance with the principle of self-determination and by allowing the Sudeten to recognize the central authority of Prague in all financial, military and even foreign affairs. More, they will say, you cannot expect us to do.

I lose no opportunity of reminding, tactfully or not, Germans of every kind (all Germans are walking gramophones, so every little helps) of what we *might* do in certain circumstances. But here I would respectfully submit a strong proviso. I trust that we shall not use the definite menace of British participation in a war, unless our case is morally copper-bottomed. The British Empire cannot set its face against the principle of self-determination. Personally, I am sorry to say, I am convinced that we cannot permanently prevent these Sudeten Germans from coming into the Reich if they wish it and undoubtedly the majority to-day do so. The Sudeten are in absolutely the same case as were the Austrians, only more so. The Austrians at least governed themselves, whereas the Sudeten are to-day ruled, as they have never before been, by Czechs. Czechs and Germans will never harmonize. It is either domination or separation. Under Austrian rule, the Czechs were always the most turbulent and troublesome of the subject races. There are, it is true, a number of Sudeten to-day who are opposed to incorporation in the Reich either because they have vested interests in Czechoslovakia or because they democratically hate the objectionable features of Nazism. But the former are a small minority and Nazism must eventually become more moderate and even those who to-day hate Nazism are still Germans and in the end the problem is primarily a racial and national one and not social or economic.

I hate the thought and I try not to be affected by this conviction of inevitability. I do believe moreover that there is a chance that a solution on lines of real equality and autonomy may prove permanent. But it is a very faint chance and it will become fainter as Nazism in Germany tends to become less violent and revolutionary. And all revolutions work themselves out in time.

Yet even when I try to imagine that that which I feel in my heart to be inevitable and evolutionary is neither, and when I think in terms of British

interests only, regardless of right or wrong, I still feel that, however repugnant, dangerous and troublesome the result may be or may seem likely to be, the truest British interest is to come down on the side of the highest moral principles. And the only lastingly right moral principle is self-determination. The British Empire is built up on it and we cannot deny it without incalculable prejudice to something which is of infinitely greater importance to the world than apprehensions of the German menace or chivalrous defence of the little dog against the big. Little dogs have also their obligations and cannot presume on their littleness. If we wish to impose law on the strong, we must also impose it on the weak, however unpopular it may be.

There are also wider aspects of this question than Sudeten and Czech or Germany and Czechoslovakia. The lot of all minorities is going to benefit by Lord Runciman's decision. The implications are wide but I do not see that we need shun them. His decision is going to be a momentous one. If it is based on moral principles regardless of all the numerous material considerations to which I need not refer, but to which others will according to their various wishes and personal views, British arbitration in other questions will be eagerly sought. If it is based on lower principles, it will not be sought again.

Moreover there is another point which is constantly in my mind, though again I try to push it into the background and it is this. If we are ever to get down to practical negotiations for an Anglo-German understanding it can only be after a solution of the Sudeten problem. If we put forward a plan which is morally doubtful and which the Germans regard as unfair to Germans, it will be unavailing to talk of settling other matters. Colonies to Hitler are of far less importance than fair treatment for Germans. An Anglo-German understanding means world peace for a generation at least. Are we to prejudice this prospect out of a sentiment for a Czechoslovakia which was constitutionally and initially a mistake?

But all this is a digression from your letter, though its bearing is obvious. Hitler may not plunge Europe into war this year, if he is certain of our intervention; but no half measures will satisfy him; so that if we put them forward, it merely means postponing the evil day with all the advantages in favour of the man who is waiting to strike when it suits him best. War or no war, there is no solution unless Lord Runciman can recommend a plan which approximates to Herr Hitler's present views, which I would briefly sum up as autonomy on Swiss lines and the eventual elimination of the Soviet-Czech alliance. They are to-day less than his full desiderata though probably more than they were at the beginning of May. You mention four alternatives with which we may be faced. I should say that not only in the fourth but also in the third of these alternatives the plebiscite proposal is the only ultimate issue if the threat of it fails.

The German reaction in the second alternative will certainly be as you suggest. It has been their attitude all along and their military preparations are based on the conviction that they will be proved to be right. As a matter of fact it will be their attitude towards any failure to reach an agreed solution.

If Lord Runciman comes down on the Czech side I do not, in fact, see how we can avoid trouble sooner or later. And even if we fought and won a war we are never going to make Czechs and German Sudeten live amicably together in future. War would merely increase the traditional hatred a hundredfold.

As regards the plebiscite I imagine that the questions to be put would be (a) incorporation in Germany (b) autonomy within Czechoslovakia (c) no change. It should be restricted to the frontier belt from Troppau right round roughly to Nikolsburg. The German areas are fairly well defined. Question (c) would be of little use except to establish the number of Czechs in these areas, and if the date of their settlement had to be inscribed I fancy it would be discovered that at least 50 per cent. of them have been put there since 1920. As for troops I fancy the Saar would form the only possible precedent. Personally I feel that, since a plebiscite would almost certainly produce an overwhelming majority for actual incorporation in the Reich, the definite threat of it should suffice to enable Benes to overcome the opposition of his military and extreme parties. It certainly would if the French were to screw their courage to the sticking point and tell him to yield or not to count on them.

I appreciate your difficulty as to giving hints to Lord Runciman and I confess that it gives me constant nightmares when I think of the immense responsibilities which rest on his shoulders, if in attempting to be fair to both sides he ignores the realistic and basic aspects of the question which in my view are (a) that the Sudeten are Germans and (b) that if they are to remain in Czechoslovakia they must be treated not as a minority but as absolute equals.

If the worst happens I fail completely to see what the French can do. Mobilize yes, but is it conceivable that they will attack the Siegfried line? I cannot believe it. And I am quite certain that the Germans will never attack the Maginot line either. There can only be stalemate in the west on the ground. The air is another question, but to start bombing each other would be lamentable and futile. So that even if France mobilises, I still hope for a breathing space in which my idea always has been that the Italians and ourselves should try and mediate. Even so it could only be on the basis of a plebiscite. We get back to that always as a last resort.

The German fortifications in the west while extremely menacing to the Czechs are reassuring as to their intentions in the west. They mean defence in the west and offence in the east. At the back of the German mind is the supreme wish to keep England out. I believe that wish to be the one thing that counts with them. They don't fear defeat unless we come in. If, they argue, Germany does not (and she will not) attack France, there is always a chance that England may keep out.

The two themes which keep recurring in this tragic picture are a plebiscite and the Prime Minister's speech of March 24th. I regard both of them as last resorts. We cannot keep having May 21sts. In the meantime I keep unofficially or indirectly, so to speak, reminding all Germans of the Prime

Minister's statement. But even if it momentarily keeps the Germans quiet, it is not going to solve this question. Utterly repugnant though it is to say so, there is no solution short of war, now or later, that does not give the Sudeten a far greater measure of real autonomy than Benes and the Czech military are yet prepared to give them.

Yours ever,  
NEVILLE HENDERSON

No. 614

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 13, 9.30 a.m.)  
*No. 360 Telegraphic [C 8924/65/18]*

BERLIN, August 13, 1938, 1.0 a.m.

Your despatch No. 1317.<sup>1</sup>

Herr Lammers, Minister in charge of Reich Chancery, happened to be passing through Berlin this evening<sup>2</sup> and I seized this fortunate opportunity to hand over memorandum in English to him with a brief covering note begging that it might be conveyed to the Chancellor as soon as possible. Herr Lammers told me that Herr Hitler was on a journey but that it should be in his hands by tomorrow afternoon. I explained why I had not had time to make German translation. I insisted on secrecy of communication mentioning that you had not even spoken to the French Government on the subject. I told Herr Lammers that I was naturally entirely at the disposition of Herr Hitler if he wished to discuss the question with me.

Herr Lammers did not read the memorandum so I gave him the gist of it describing it as direct appeal to the Chancellor. I added that I was communicating confidentially a copy of it to Herr Woermann for transmission to the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Herr Lammers was entirely non-committal but friendly when I urged the necessity of co-operation during negotiations at Prague.

I subsequently called at Ministry of Foreign Affairs and gave a copy to Herr Woermann whose attitude on the other hand verged on the truculent. Possibly he was playing to the Ribbentrop gallery. He said that he regarded the memorandum as unwarrantable and contrary to diplomatic procedure and that he would reject it out of hand. I pointed out that it was addressed to me for communication direct to the Chancellor and I hoped that the latter would take a different view. In any case I was only asking him to send a copy to his Minister and I impressed on him that it was an entirely secret document. Herr Woermann said that only answer which could be given was that already given to Military Attaché. I told him that His Majesty's Government were not contesting Germany's right to test the efficiency of its war machine but were seriously considering the reaction which such measures at this juncture might produce. I asked him to look at matters not solely from the German angle but from that of the unfortunate and dangerous repercussion

<sup>1</sup> No. 608.

<sup>2</sup> This telegram was drafted on August 12.

which these unusual measures might have in Czechoslovakia and elsewhere. We had undertaken a most difficult and thankless task at Prague and I ventured to hope that the Chancellor would understand the position better and be more helpful than he, Woermann, apparently wished to be.

It may be taken for granted that Woermann's attitude will be that of Herr von Ribbentrop. If it prevails with the Chancellor I anticipate reply through the Minister for Foreign Affairs to the effect that arrangements already made cannot now be modified. The alternative would be for the Chancellor who may be in the neighbourhood of Berlin early next week to give me his answer direct.

### No. 615

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received August 13, 3.23 p.m.)*

*No. 438 Telegraphic [C 8301/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 13, 1938, 1.50 p.m.

Lord Allen<sup>1</sup> has given me the following information regarding his recent interview with Herr von Ribbentrop. I am reporting it from here because I understand Lord Allen had no subsequent opportunity of communicating it to Sir Neville Henderson.

2. Herr von Ribbentrop gave the impression of being uncertain of his own position personally and more nervous and excitable than on any previous occasion when Lord Allen had seen him.

3. He seemed anxious to know the following in regard to Lord Runciman's mission. Firstly, whether his report was likely to be limited to statement of facts or would be advisory. Secondly, whether if no immediate solution could be found Lord Runciman was likely to recommend some interim solution or method of further procedure. Thirdly, whether there was possibility that Lord Runciman's eventual report might be taken as a basis for consideration by an international conference e.g. of the four Powers Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy. Lord Allen was uncertain whether any particular significance attached to this last enquiry which, however, seemed to me to derive additional importance from similar reference made by Herr von Dirksen to Sir Neville Henderson as reported at the end of third paragraph of Berlin despatch No. 829<sup>2</sup> of August 5.

4. Despite swerves and blustering in the course of conversation lasting over an hour Lord Allen had the impression that Herr von Ribbentrop desired at least temporary solution of Sudeten problem.

<sup>1</sup> Lord Allen of Hurtwood. This interview was entirely unofficial in character and had not taken place on the initiative or suggestion of H.M. Government or of H.M. Missions at Berlin or Prague.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. This despatch reported a conversation between Sir N. Henderson and the German Ambassador in London during a visit by the latter to Berlin (see No. 581). Herr von Dirksen had referred to 'some talk in London of a Four Power Conference' should Lord Runciman's Mission prove unsuccessful.

No. 616

*Mr. Carvell<sup>1</sup> (Munich) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received August 13, 8.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 6 Telegraphic [C 8285/65/18]*

MUNICH, August 13, 1938, 6.15 p.m.

My telegram No. 4 of August 5.<sup>2</sup>

I continue to receive (? news)<sup>3</sup> from various sources which under any other régime would seem to indicate that something more than a modified mobilization is being prepared. Men of military age have been refused permission to visit Italy with the result that Italian tourist agencies have been compelled to cancel special arrangements. In one case an ex-officer with no connexion with New Army has been refused permission to travel abroad. Women shop assistants have received in the last few days instructions to (? report)<sup>3</sup> to local labour office for emergency duty.

I am informed that a member of the Italian Consulate General has said in confidence that Marshal Balbo would not see Hitler today but that it is believed that he will warn Herr Hess that Germany should proceed with great caution in regard to Czechoslovakia since while Italy sympathised with German aims no direct Italian interest was involved.

Source mentioned inclined to think that Czech situation would be allowed to develop to a point when a partial German mobilization would be followed by a general mobilization in the hope of bluffing a favourable solution. Report about Balbo is being sent to 'Sunday Times'.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> H.M. Consul-General at Munich.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. In this telegram Mr. Carvell reported on an abnormal increase in military activity in his district.

<sup>3</sup> The text is here uncertain.

No. 617

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received August 14, 10.0 a.m.)*  
*No. 439 Telegraphic [C 8275/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 13, 1938, 7.5 p.m.

My telegram No. 436.<sup>1</sup>

I mentioned this matter to Minister for Foreign Affairs at a reception last night. He, like the General Staff, was at pains to belittle significance of 'declaration' and said that rendering given in yesterday evening's press was misleading and that Government were thinking of issuing some kind of *démenti*. (It has not appeared in today's press. Literal translation of whole statement is enclosed in my immediately following telegram.<sup>2</sup>) Dr. Krofta continued that despite real unimportance of the statement he was furious

<sup>1</sup> No. 610.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed.



when he read it realising capital which might be made out of it for propaganda abroad. ('Die Zeit' publishes an extra article on the front page today together with note on Chairman of Officers' Association Dr. Markovic who, it says, stands closely to the President of the Republic and is well known in Jednota<sup>3</sup> circles.)

Military Attaché points out official notification may well be true as General Staff assert that no meeting of officers was held to decide on the issue of the statement and that no one was authorised to speak on behalf of officers, nevertheless the editor of the paper would not have published it if he had not felt that it represented the views of a large section of the army.

In conversation with a member of my staff an official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasised that statement was not designed to attack principle of granting concessions to Sudeten Germans but to insist that an end must be put to the present weakening of State authority in the Sudeten areas. I learn from other sources that that question is again causing concern in Czech circles as it was before May 21.

Please inform the War Office of this telegram and of my telegram No. 436. Repeated to Berlin, Paris, Rome, and Warsaw.

<sup>3</sup> The Národní Jednota organizations, i.e. the Czech national defence unions.

#### No. 618

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 14, 10.0 a.m.)  
*No. 442 Telegraphic [C 8277/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 13, 1938, 8.45 p.m.

Yesterday Military Attaché was invited to see Colonel Hajek, Chief of Military Intelligence, who informed him that Sudeten Germans were about to be supplied with arms from Germany. Colonel Hajek had reason to believe that what he termed a fiscal revolt would take place in Sudeten country about the end of this month or in September which Czechs would be forced to put down. This would be signal for S.A. and S.S. men to enter territory to protect Sudeten Germans and eviction of the former would be in turn signal for German Army to interfere.

2. Colonel Stronge asked whether Czechs were not in a position to stop any large quantities of arms entering the country to which question Colonel Hajek gave an evasive reply but meanwhile he told Major Sutton Pratt today, it seems intentionally, 'We are ready to keep their entry under observation and to watch their destination so as to be able to make surprise *coup* and capture dumps at appropriate moment.' Military Attaché is not satisfied with this explanation as arms might be distributed secretly in meantime.

3. He asked Colonel Hajek how it would be possible for S.A. men to enter the country unobserved in sufficient numbers to be of use in view of Czech measures for closely watching the frontier. Answer given was that frontier

guards were only small posts which could easily be surprised. On being further pressed Colonel Hajek closed subject and said that in about ten days' time he could give further particulars. In the meantime he asked Colonel Stronge not to mention even to me what he had told (? him adding)<sup>1</sup> that he, Colonel Hajek, had been guilty of an indiscretion in saying so much. Military Attaché asserted that Colonel Hajek's manner was shifty and mysterious, (? throughout)<sup>1</sup> interview and it is not clear what his object was in imparting this information.

Repeated to Berlin Saving.

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.

### No. 619

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 14, noon)  
*No. 444 Telegraphic [C 8279/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 13, 1938, 8.45 p.m.

My telegram No. 439,<sup>1</sup> last paragraph.

His Majesty's Consul, Liberec, reports that in his neighbourhood up to the present there have been no visible signs of any increasing disregard for authority amongst the Sudeten Germans. He has observed no provocative behaviour in the streets and the use of German greeting seems already to have become less common than it was. He has no doubt, however, that enthusiastic demonstrations at Breslau have made a great impression on Sudeten Germans who remained at home and have given impulse to the idea that the Sudeten Germans can only be really happy when they are united with their German mother-country.

The sole outward sign of a stiffening in the Sudeten German attitude which he has noticed has been revival of old newspaper criticisms against . . .<sup>2</sup> European Powers, petty tyranny, etc. These ceased to appear so often after May 21 but have become frequent again of late.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 617.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

### No. 620

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 14, 10.0 a.m.)  
*No. 362 Telegraphic [C 8924/65/18]*

BERLIN, August 13, 1938, 9.26 p.m.

My telegram No. 360.<sup>1</sup>

I saw Dr. Woermann this afternoon. He told me that he had been instructed to tell me that Herr von Ribbentrop had been unpleasantly surprised at method of making communication direct to Chancellor instead of

<sup>1</sup> No. 614.

through Minister for Foreign Affairs and that he earnestly hoped that such a course would be avoided in future.

The message was couched in studiously civil and moderate language though Dr. Woermann mentioned confidentially that Minister had been greatly upset. I pointed out that this was special case inasmuch as communication took the form of a reply to Captain Wiedemann's direct mission to London last month and amounted to less than my requesting a personal interview with the Chancellor. I undertook however to convey Herr von Ribbentrop's message as regards the future to you.

No. 621

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 14, 10.0 a.m.)  
No. 363 Telegraphic [C 8284/65/18]

BERLIN, August 13, 1938, 9.26 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

After conveying Herr von Ribbentrop's message to me Dr. Woermann said that he had to draw my attention to a matter of much greater importance, namely a Havas message from London broadcast early this morning through Luxemburg station of which following is a summary:—

'Reports regarding German military measures have caused British representative at Berlin to enquire as to their scope and object.

'Reply given by German authorities was to the effect that it was exclusively a matter of manoeuvres the preparation for which required extensive preparation, but measures were in no way abnormal.

'According to official but hitherto unconfirmed information British representative expressed opinion that in view of international tension it was desirable that these military exercises should be spread over a long period and localised so that these German Government measures should not have the appearance of deployment and of giant military preparations, intended use of which might give rise to uneasiness.

'British diplomatic circles consider that these measures, not only in the present circumstances but also in themselves, having regard to possible repercussions, constitute a considerable display of force.'

Though I trust I convinced Dr. Woermann that this broadcast referred unofficially to enquiries made last week by the Military Attaché and myself and not to the secret memorandum communicated yesterday to the Chancellor, I could but deeply deplore with him unfortunate indiscretion at this precise juncture.

As Dr. Woermann himself pointed out it would be read by Herr Hitler before he had the actual memorandum in his hands and would produce most regrettable impression especially after my assurances yesterday as regards secrecy of our *démarche*.

<sup>1</sup> No. 620.

Being Havas message though from London, I told Dr. Woermann that I could only imagine that indiscretion originated somehow in Paris. Neither I nor my staff had mentioned to anyone in Berlin enquiries which I had made.

I greatly fear that this untimely broadcast will have gravely prejudiced any chance there was of yesterday's memorandum producing desired effect.

No. 622

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax  
(Received August 13)*

*No. 379 Saving: Telegraphic [C 8346/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 13, 1938

My telegram No. 433.<sup>1</sup>

In conversation with a member of my staff last night Dr. Meissner, leading member of Coalition Committee, expressed himself in pessimistic terms regarding meeting with Sudeten delegation on August 11. He said that President of the Council had opened meeting with a statement of Government views.

Dr. Hodza had therein rejected Sudeten party's demand that each nationality should be recognised as a juridical personality but had invited Sudeten delegation to start forthwith detailed negotiations on national organisation of the State. Government's proposals on this point had then been explained by Dr. Meissner who claimed that they did in fact give Sudetens the territorial and personal autonomy which they claimed even though differences might still exist as to scope of autonomy.

Dr. Meissner went on to say that it was a great disappointment that Sudeten delegation had refused to start the detailed negotiations straight away but had said that they could not give their reply before August 17. Minister of Education who was present at part of conversation also expressed forebodings and said he feared that on August 17 a deadlock might well arise.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram reported a semi-official communiqué on the meeting referred to in the text, and a statement issued by the Sudeten Party, after a meeting of its Political Committee, approving the attitude of the Sudeten delegation in refusing separate negotiations with Cabinet Ministers or with the Special Committee of the Coalition parties.

No. 623

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax  
(Received August 16)*

*No. 380 Saving: Telegraphic [C 8361/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 13, 1938

As an illustration of the difficulty which the Government have in improving their relations with Henlein Party I may mention that Minister for

Foreign Affairs gave a dinner last night followed by a reception in Lord Runciman's honour. He invited the leading members of the Henlein Party to the reception. They excused themselves on the ground that they were in mourning for Bayerle the man murdered at Hoehal.<sup>1</sup>

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> According to a Government communiqué on August 9 an altercation had taken place on the night of August 7 between members of the Sudeten German party and of the German Social Democratic party at an inn in the village of Hoehal, when a Henleinist named Bayerle had been stabbed. The police had established the identity of his assailant as a political refugee from Vienna named Hoiden. Mr. Newton reported on August 11 that Major Sutton-Pratt, who had investigated on the spot, confirmed the accuracy of the Government communiqué and that 'the aggressors were undoubtedly Sudeten Germans belonging to the Social Democratic party and, indeed, spoke no word of Czech'.

No. 624

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 16)

No. 382A Saving: Telegraphic [C 8363/1941/18]

PRAGUE, August 13, 1938

My telegram No. 418.<sup>1</sup>

I ascertained from Minister for Foreign Affairs on August 12 that German Government had not so far vouchsafed any reply to message given by President Benes to German Minister on July 27.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 571.

No. 625

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 15)

No. 383 Saving: Telegraphic [C 8348/1941/18]

PRAGUE, August 13, 1938

Your telegram No. 30 Saving.<sup>1</sup>

I took opportunity of visit to Minister for Foreign Affairs on August 12 to leave with him the extract from your speech. In doing so I drew Dr. Krofta's attention to a recommendation of principle of partnership and I reminded His Excellency that I had ventured to make a somewhat similar personal suggestion to President Benes in the latter part of last April. President had then expressed his own agreement but explained that he had to proceed with caution owing to certain Czech susceptibilities (see paragraph 4 of my despatch No. 117<sup>2</sup> of April 19 and my telegram No. 84<sup>3</sup> of April 23).

<sup>1</sup> No. 586.

<sup>2</sup> No. 150 in Volume I of this Series.

<sup>3</sup> No. 156 in Volume I of this Series.

Dr. Krofta replied that he was aware of what had been said on this point and on the subject of nationalities. Unfortunately Czechoslovakia was in much more difficult position than British Empire and the task of Czechoslovak Government was rendered much more difficult by such speeches as had been made by Herr Henlein at Breslau and by his deputy Herr Frank on August 11 at the funeral of Bayerle. At Breslau Herr Henlein had in effect promised that Sudeten Germans would be obedient and loyal to Herr Hitler as leader of the whole Germanic people of which the Sudeten Germans felt themselves to be a part. At Bayerle's funeral Herr Frank and other orators had spoken of German soil being drenched with the blood of the third hero who had died for Sudeten German cause. Such speeches did not make it easy to create spirit of partnership. As regards what had been said at Breslau I reminded Dr. Krofta that Herr Henlein had acknowledged Sudeten obligations to the State and I suggested that while National Socialist racial theories were novel and difficult to follow, in their implications there might be some analogy in the position of Roman Catholics who could combine loyal citizenship with loyalty and obedience to the Pope. Dr. Krofta rejoined that in political sympathy of Roman Catholics there was no dualism and that in some speech during National Socialist Party rally at Nuremberg two or three years ago Herr Hitler had said that Germans even resident abroad owed loyalty to the Reich in the political as well as in the cultural sphere.

Dr. Krofta complained also of flagrant and unjust propaganda which German Government were conducting against Czechoslovakia. I observed that Czechoslovak Government might really be glad that this propaganda was so exaggerated because it would carry the less conviction abroad and be the more likely to recoil on the heads of its perpetrators. In particular I warned him as I have other leading personalities who have mentioned the matter to me that Czechs should on no account allow themselves to be provoked.

Repeated to Berlin.

#### No. 626

*Letter from Mr. R. I. Campbell to Sir O. Sargent*  
[C 8329/1941/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, PARIS, August 13, 1938

Please see my telegram No. 505 Saving<sup>1</sup> of August 10.

Massigli, who had asked me to call to see him this afternoon, raised the subject of Czechoslovak treaty relations and repeated that the French Government saw great danger in our suggestions. I repeated what I had said to M. Bonnet on August 10th and added that I thought His Majesty's Government would wish to hear the views of the French Government on how to meet a German demand for a modification of Czechoslovakia's treaty relations or a situation in which it was obvious that those relations were a

<sup>1</sup> No. 601.

cause of irritation and tension in Europe. But he was not to be drawn beyond M. Bonnet's expression of his aversion from discussing the matter. He did however go over once again the arguments he gave me as set out in my letter to Strang of July 13th.<sup>2</sup> He particularly emphasised that once Germany secured the supplies which a penetration to the South-East would give her she would be careful not to get embroiled with Russia but would then turn West again. For her, as for the rest of us, since the Far East was lost to Europe, the Atlantic was the real field for expansion, as her extensive propaganda in South America showed. The plan was clearly Morocco for the Germans (and Tunis for the Italians). The only way to prevent this was by maintaining the Czechoslovak barrier to penetration into South-Eastern Europe. Moreover, Czechoslovakia was essential for military action against Germany in case of need by means of air attacks. The question had been studied, and it had been found that it would be possible for the French Air Force to fly to Czechoslovakia and operate against Germany from there.

He then told me of a conversation between François-Poncet and Göring about Czechoslovakia, which he thought incidentally was an amusing example of the 'psychosis' existing in Germany over the matter. Göring had ranted a good deal and said that a nation of 75,000,000 could not admit of being insulted by a nation of only 10,000,000 (or whatever the Czech population is). It was intolerable. Since May 21st the Czechs thought they could act as they liked and allowed themselves to go to any lengths. Germany could not stand it, nor tolerate a repetition of circumstances in which the Czechs thought they had successfully imposed their will on her. (The nation of 75,000,000, said Massigli, evidently thought that they were being threatened and oppressed by the nation of 10,000,000.) France and Great Britain could have their Czechs: Germany didn't want them: they could go to the Devil: but She must have her Sudeten: She *must* have her Sudeten. Göring had also said, and this was the point, that Germany would do nothing while the Runciman mission was still at work. If I got the matter right, Germany, he said, would wait to see what Lord Runciman recommended, and what France and the United Kingdom did as a result. The Czechs would almost certainly be stupid and intransigent and then he expected that Germany would find herself free to get what she wanted without a risk of general conflagration. This in Massigli's argument bore on his view of the dangers of any attempt to modify Czechoslovakia's position in such a way as to weaken her, and to remove the barrier she formed against a German advance to the South-East. Did we want Germany to be free to render herself independent of extra-European supplies (e.g. of oil) by penetration in that direction? Some sections of opinion in England and in France thought we should not try to prevent Germany from doing so peacefully. But he saw great danger in the long run in her doing so and thought we should not make things easy for her.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. Mr. Campbell wrote that in an interview with M. Massigli on July 12 he had taken the opportunity to raise this question, and had obtained M. Massigli's personal reactions which were as indicated above.

From this I take it that the view of the Quai d'Orsay may be that it is better to face the prospect of a running sore in Central Europe, after removing, if we can, the danger of an immediate explosion over the Sudeten, and that one of their reasons for doing what they can, with us, to make the Czechs settle the Sudeten question is to strengthen and unify Czechoslovakia so that she can still play her rôle as a barrier to Germany. In our suggestions for a modification of Czech treaty relations they may well see a step which would run counter to this object.

Yours ever,  
R. I. CAMPBELL

No. 627

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received August 15, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 364 Telegraphic [C 8318/65/18]*

BERLIN, August 15, 1938, 12.48 a.m.

German military measures.

Anything is possible. Nevertheless there should be some limit to stupidity and it is hard to believe that Germany will risk aggressive action while Lord Runciman is still at Prague and before he has terminated his investigations. The Germans are under no illusion as to the possibility of British participation which is the one thing they seek to avoid.

As I see it they [*sic*] are based on the following sequence:—Since Anschluss the Germans regard the case of the Sudetens as the same as that of Germans of Austria—of which they used to form part.

Herr Hitler has nevertheless expressed his desire for a peaceful solution and his willingness, in spite of right of self-determination, to respect the integrity of Czechoslovakia today provided Sudetens are given home rule. Three months ago Germans might have accepted local autonomy if it had been real and unequivocal in Sudeten communes and districts. It is doubtful today whether they will agree to anything much short of a form of federation on Swiss pattern.

The Germans have in their own eyes been patient for three months in the hope that British Government, in whose good faith they believed but of whose success by persuasive methods they doubted, might be able to bring Czechoslovak Government to reason. They regard first attempt of British to have failed since M. Benes has in their opinion refused to appreciate the true position and is still thinking in terms of a national state and of Sudetens as an inferior minority. Even if M. Benes himself were willing to modify this attitude they believe his extremists will never allow him to do so and particularly his military party whom they regard as subsidised and incited by Moscow. They believe in any case that M. Benes is a gambler who rather than face his own opposition will risk everything on French and British support which they believe that the May crisis encouraged him to count upon.

At the same time willy-nilly the Germans are prepared to give British



intervention a second chance through Lord Runciman. But they are convinced that his efforts will in face of Czech obstinacy similarly prove vain. Moreover the failure of the first attempt has enabled the forward party here to carry the day to the extent of getting authority to show the Czechs and the world that there is a limit to German patience.

Hence these military measures, which though in effect intended to impress the world can be justified in German eyes from the standpoint of military efficiency. It is pointed out that other countries have at other times adopted similar measures and that even if theirs are more extensive that is their own business. Few Germans can ever see any side but their own of any case and they similarly disregard in this instance the provocation involved or alternative argument [*sic*]<sup>1</sup> that if European tension is to be relieved it is the Czechs who can best allay it by being reasonable.

The forward party numerically weak but influentially strong does not seek any compromise solution and is probably pressing to cut the gordian knot, even at the risk of general war. For such as these the present military preparations are a means to an end.

The mass of the nation is however frightened of war, dislikes this sabre-rattling and undoubtedly desires a peaceful issue. The casting vote rests with Herr Hitler and I do not feel that he himself has yet made up his mind what to do. However consistent he is in his aims he is notoriously long in deciding as to the specific action to be taken to achieve them. But once as the result of his own detection or of inspiration from on high he takes a definite decision, he acts, as we have good reason to know, like lightning. He would certainly prefer peace but feels like the forward party that M. Benes will never yield enough except to force and that therefore the moment of inspiration may come at any moment. Otherwise he would scarcely have authorised these military measures. If the moment does come the German army this time will be ready which it was not in May. It was probably blamed for that and so far as the army itself is concerned the present situation is its reply to May crisis.

For the last three months I have incessantly reported that German army was being steadily prepared for all eventualities but I have drawn distinction between display of force and definite will to employ it. The situation in my opinion is still unchanged in principle in this respect though aggravated in form and more than ever fraught with incidental danger.

Moreover unless and until an acceptable solution of the Sudeten question is forthcoming the situation will so remain growing gradually acuter till it breaks one way or the other. Nevertheless subject to the usual saving clauses I do not foresee rupture before Lord Runciman has announced his conclusions or alternatively before Nuremberg meeting.

Unless Lord Runciman succeeds by a miracle in achieving an agreed settlement at Prague Hobson's choice would therefore seem to me to be between compelling by force either Czechoslovak Government or the German Government to accept terms of which they disapprove.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> It seems possible that this should read: 'or alternatively argue . . . '.

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received August 17, 9.30 a.m.)*

*No. 450 Telegraphic [C 8400/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 16, 1938, 9.30 p.m.

Military Attaché was informed this morning August 16 that General Staff while admitting that general situation must naturally cause anxiety are not unduly apprehensive. Meeting of Supreme Military Council is however taking place today. Lord Runciman, who saw President Benes this afternoon, found him uneasy in regard to German intentions though President did not explain precisely what he feared.

2. Official at Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who is generally well-informed, told me that in his opinion military manœuvres in Germany were not causing exceptional anxiety in Czechoslovakia as they were not considered to have added greatly to normal and constant German menace. Having regard to the size of their standing army German Government could at any time launch a sudden attack and if they decided to do so would not need to make any overt preparations. When the moment came they would probably set troops in motion towards the frontier as in the case of Austria without their real objective being known at first even to the troops themselves. On the other hand of course it could not be overlooked that under cover of what might seem, in view of publicity involved, to be a bluff Germany might be preparing to strike.

3. A much greater cause for anxiety in the opinion of this informant was discovery that the Reich was trying to arm Sudeten German population. Military authorities had information that a series of deliveries were to be made and they had planned to watch these deliveries before taking action. Owing to some excess of zeal however a wagon had already been detained so that this particular plan would presumably cease to be followed (see my telegrams Nos. 442<sup>1</sup> and 443<sup>2</sup>). My informant remarked incidentally that in his opinion German Government did not want war but may be conducting such a violent propaganda and resorting to such dangerous measures that war might easily result.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 618.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. In this telegram Mr. Newton reported that Major Sutton-Pratt had been asked by the Czechoslovak authorities to investigate a case of alleged arms smuggling near Freiwaldau, but, on Mr. Newton's instructions, had declared this beyond his terms of reference. Mr. Newton inquired what attitude should be adopted to possible future requests for such investigations.

No. 629

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 17, 5.0 p.m.)  
*No. 451 Telegraphic [C 8434/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 17, 1938, 3.10 p.m.

My telegram No. 437.<sup>1</sup>

Following from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin for Mr. Strang:—

1. Yesterday (August 16) Lord Runciman saw President and spoke severely to him about delay in taking action regarding appointment of officials. President promised that something should be done immediately.

2. Yesterday Dr. Hodza feared breakdown on the Sudeten side at the next day's meeting. He asked Lord Runciman to do his best to prevent this.

3. Last night (August 16) Kundt informed us that he proposed to break off negotiations with the Government Committee at the meeting on the following day owing to negative attitude of the Government to Sudeten proposals. Lord Runciman persuaded him not unwillingly to agree to a postponement instead of a break so as to give us time to complete our study of the Government proposals which we are now undertaking with co-operation of the members of the Government Committee.

4. Lord Runciman's meeting with Henlein takes place tomorrow.

5. Incidents such as the retired officers' memorandum and M. Bata's speech<sup>2</sup> may indicate that Czech attitude is hardening. Kundt seems convinced that this is so. There is a strong (? anti-)concessions<sup>3</sup> party and Dr. Hodza may be unable to make any further advance. According to Kundt Dr. Hodza would (? like to) be dictatorial ruler (? under) President with Cabinet of officials and army support in the background.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram briefly reported on Lord Runciman's interview with Herr Frank, of which a fuller version is given in No. 611.

<sup>2</sup> The officers' manifesto, summarized in No. 610, had specially commended 'the words of Dr. J. A. Bata', a leading Czech industrialist, who had attacked the weakness and indecision shown in high quarters towards irredentists.

<sup>3</sup> The text in the last two sentences of this telegram is uncertain.

No. 630

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*  
*No. 316 Telegraphic [C 7892/65/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, August 17, 1938, 11.0 p.m.

As you will be aware from my telegram No. 313,<sup>1</sup> I have not informed the French Government of the *démarche* which you were instructed in my despatch No. 1317<sup>2</sup> to make to the Chancellor on the subject of the recent German military measures.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. See No. 604, note 2.

<sup>2</sup> No. 608.

I feel I cannot much longer abstain from taking the French Government into our confidence in this important matter.

I shall therefore be glad if you will explain the situation either to Dr. Lammers or to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as you think best. You should say that, as you told Dr. Lammers on August 12, we did not, in the interests of secrecy, tell the French Government of the communication to the Chancellor, and that we have not yet told them anything of the matter. You should say that I had hoped to have been in a position before now to make known to the French Government not only the fact of the *démarche* but also the substance of the German Government's reply. In this I have been disappointed and I feel that, in a matter of this importance, I cannot any longer abstain from taking the French Government into our confidence and informing them of the nature of the communication we made. I therefore propose to inform the French Chargé d'Affaires here in general terms, before the end of the week, of the action we have taken.

Repeated to Paris.

No. 631

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 18)

No. 399 Saving: *Telegraphic* [C 8437/65/18]

BERLIN, August 17, 1938

Military Attaché has heard on fairly good authority that Chancellor held a conference on the evening of August 15 at which both Generals Keitel and von Brauchitsch were present to discuss foreign reactions to the mobilization measures.

This information fits in very well with the appearance on August 16 in all newspapers of articles ridiculing foreign anxiety over this question. It is also interesting to notice that Military Attaché met German Military Attaché in London here on the same day and it is reasonable to suppose that he too assisted at the alleged conference.

There is obviously a keen desire on the German side for information as to the reactions of His Majesty's Government to a possible German move against Czechoslovakia.

No. 632

*Sir N. Charles (Rome) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 19)

No. 176 Saving: *Telegraphic* [C 8474/1941/18]

ROME, August 17, 1938

Minister for Foreign Affairs whom I met today stated, in reply to a question as to the intentions of Germany in regard to Czechoslovakia, that the

position had not changed during the past month or two. The Germans, he said, did not want war and they were 'waiting to see what would happen'. He did not volunteer any observations on the position of his own Government. Repeated to Berlin and Prague.

No. 633

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 18)

*No. 397 Saving: Telegraphic [C 8435/1941/18]*

BERLIN, August 17, 1938

The following facts should be borne in mind when one anxiously wonders whether Herr Hitler has yet made up his mind that the British negotiations have failed and that a settlement of the Sudeten question can only be achieved by direct action.

Our original intervention at Prague early in May was accepted by the German Government as 'heartily welcome'. That was the phrase repeated to me more than once by Herr von Ribbentrop after his return from Italy and it was undoubtedly the echo of Herr Hitler's own words. And this in spite of all his previous public statements that the Sudeten question was a purely domestic German problem.

Officially at any rate Herr Hitler has not yet abandoned Herr Henlein who is notoriously the most moderate of the Sudeten leaders, in spite of considerable pressure to have him replaced by someone more extreme.

The Runciman mission was similarly accepted without demur and has so far had a good German press in spite of Herr von Ribbentrop's peevishness on the subject. For this attitude one must assume Herr Hitler to be responsible.

He was billed to speak a fortnight ago at the Breslau festival which was attended by 32,000 Sudeten athletes who gave him a rapturous welcome. The fact that he did not speak, in spite of grave disappointment at his failure to do so, indicates unwillingness to complicate the issue at this moment.

Herr Hitler cannot however avoid making public speeches at the Nuremberg Rally in the first week of September. The Rally will almost certainly be given the name of 'Great Germany' in honour of the union with Austria and the case of the Sudeten who always formed part of Austria cannot be ignored. It is on that account that it seems essential that Lord Runciman should have given expression to some recommendation if only in principle by the end of this month. A detailed scheme would of course take months to elaborate but the main lines of a recommendation is [*sic*] another matter. In the midst of so much explosive material and deepening hatred it is in nobody's interest to keep the main lines of the issue in suspense.

At Nuremberg, after four months negotiations at Prague, Herr Hitler will probably be obliged to come down on the side either of the moderates or of the extremists. There is a very clear tug of war in Germany between the

two. If moderation is to win the day Herr Hitler must have obtained a sufficient measure of satisfaction to enable him to resist the theory of his extremists who insist that the British Government or Lord Runciman will never succeed by mere persuasion and that direct action is the only method by which in their view peace can finally be achieved in Europe.

Repeated to Prague.

No. 634

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received August 18)*

*No. 864 [C 8427/1941/18]*

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *August 17, 1938*

My Lord,

Information has reached me that Herr Dietrich, the Head of the Reich Press Bureau, has received an order to be prepared in the near future to alter the tone of the Press agitation against Czechoslovakia. He is to be prepared to drop the Sudeten question and embark on propaganda of a much more general nature in which it is to be made quite clear that 'Germany's objectives are not limited ones'.

2. While I am not disposed to attach undue importance to this information, I consider that it may well represent the views of the megalomaniac section of the Party. Dr. Goebbels, from whom this order would necessarily have been passed to Herr Dietrich, is himself a member of that section and his recent considerable loss of prestige as compared with Field-Marshal Göring and Herr Himmler may well impel him, like Herr von Ribbentrop, to outbid the extremists on the chance of re-establishing his position. I have already remarked in the Press (see my telegram No. 393 Saving<sup>1</sup>) the recent absence of references to the old catchword 'within the framework of the State' and I am bound once more to conclude that the hungrier the German wolf becomes the larger will be his meal. It is for this reason that I am so convinced of the necessity of Lord Runciman's pronouncing a recommendation of principle before the end of the current month.

I have, &c.,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

<sup>1</sup> Not printed.

No. 635

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received August 18)*

*No. 867 [C 8428/65/18]*

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *August 17, 1938*

My Lord,

I have the honour to transmit to Your Lordship herewith a copy of a minute by the Military Attaché summarising available information as to the

present development of the German reservist 'exercises'—they are freely called test mobilisation here.

2. Colonel Mason-MacFarlane will of course continue to keep as close a watch on the further expansion of these measures as the present very difficult circumstances permit, with particular regard to the possibility that their full scope has in fact been concealed from him by the German General Staff.

I have, &c.,  
NEVILLE HENDERSON

ENCLOSURE IN No. 635

BERLIN, *August 17, 1938*

*The Ambassador*

Information regarding the German military measures now commencing is difficult to obtain, and, for obvious reasons, I am refraining from making official enquiries until a reply is received to the communication Your Excellency recently passed to Herr Hitler.

As far as available information goes, my general impressions are broadly as follows:—

a. In connection with the programme of autumn training as outlined to me by the German War Office, a start seems to have been definitely made in Bavaria. Much more activity is reported from Bavaria than from elsewhere in Germany, especially in connection with the calling up of Reservists and the impressment of Motor Transport and other 'mobilisation' measures.

I have nothing to indicate the exact scope of what is afoot in Bavaria, but the military measures now being taken are clearly on a considerable scale.

b. In my memorandum No. 421/21/38 of 16th August<sup>1</sup> I have submitted information from a certain source that the process of test mobilisation started yesterday throughout Germany. I have no direct confirmation of this, although the test mobilisation is everywhere one of the main topics of talk.

I think however at the moment that Bavaria seems to be ahead of other parts of the country in its execution of the test, and for this reason and the fact that things have clearly started earlier than we originally anticipated, there is still reason to *hope* that the whole operation will be spread over a fairly long period and may assume a less formidable aspect as viewed from a foreign angle than we thought.

c. There is no doubt at all that work on defences in the West is proceeding at almost hectic speed. There is also evidence that work on defences on the Polish frontier is being speeded up, and that the scope of these defences is being increased.

I know for a fact that only the day before yesterday a further trainload of over 500 Berlin workmen left Berlin for Trier.

d. From elsewhere in Germany indications of military activity keep coming in.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. See No. 658, note 1.

Both Reservists and Landwehr in East Prussia have been warned for a month's training.

A considerable number of Reservists and Landwehr recently left Berlin for Jüterbog.

Abnormal military movement from Bavaria into Austria continues to be reported.

There is however, as yet, little to indicate precisely when and where the various concentrations for the Exercises as outlined to me by the War Ministry are likely to take place. If the information from the source which I have mentioned above is to be believed, something much more widespread than the German War Office told me is in progress.

I still feel that we are as yet in no way justified in supposing that Herr Hitler has made up his mind to go to war this autumn. On the other hand the amount of uneasiness and unrest in the country cannot but indicate that this possibility is very greatly feared by many responsible sections of the German public.

F. N. MASON-MACFARLANE  
*Colonel, Military Attaché.*

No. 636

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 1341 [C 8374/65/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, August 17, 1938

Sir,

The German Chargé d'Affaires called at the Foreign Office on August 15th to convey a message from Herr von Ribbentrop to myself on the lines of that given to Your Excellency by Herr Woermann as reported in your telegram No. 362:<sup>1</sup> namely that Herr von Ribbentrop had been unpleasantly surprised at the method of communicating our memorandum of the 11th August direct to the Chancellor instead of through the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and that he earnestly hoped that such a course would be avoided in future.

2. Herr Kordt was told that you were carrying out my instructions in presenting the memorandum direct to Herr Hitler, for whom it was intended; and it was put to him that Ambassadors surely had by custom the right of access to the chief of a State to whom they were accredited. For the rest, he was assured that I would be informed once more of Herr von Ribbentrop's communication.

3. Herr Kordt then proceeded to refer to the Prime Minister's letter to the German Ambassador of August 3rd.<sup>2</sup> Here again Herr von Ribbentrop considered that it would have been more usual that this communication should have been made to him direct, especially as the hope was expressed that Herr Hitler would give full consideration to my letter to Herr von Ribbentrop of July 28th.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No. 620.

<sup>2</sup> No. 574.

<sup>3</sup> No. 556.



4. It was explained that this letter was in the nature of a continuation of a conversation which the Prime Minister had had with Herr von Dirksen on the eve of the latter's departure on leave, and that it was intended to bring up to date the principal subject which they had discussed, namely Czechoslovakia. Thus the Prime Minister had in his letter been able to explain to Herr von Dirksen the views and hopes that he had formed in connexion with Lord Runciman's mission, which had been decided upon subsequent to his conversation with the Ambassador in London.

5. Lastly Herr Kordt said that he had been instructed to draw our attention to the Havas report given out by the Luxemburg wireless on August 14th, alleging representations on our part in connexion with the forthcoming German military measures (see your telegram No. 363<sup>4</sup>). Regret was expressed at this inopportune report but it was pointed out to Herr Kordt, as you had observed to Herr Woermann, that the report could not possibly refer to the memorandum to Herr Hitler of August 11th but was evidently based upon suggestions and enquiries which Your Excellency and your Military Attaché had made the week before. Herr Kordt asked whether he could report that we regretted this indiscretion and was told that he certainly could; but it was suggested to him that any action on our part to deny it or explain it away would only result in further undesirable publicity. To this Herr Kordt agreed, but he expressed the hope that in future special efforts should be made to prevent these continual leakages in the case of confidential communications passing between our two Governments. He was naturally told that we for our part would be only too glad if they could be prevented, although it was always very difficult to track these leakages down to their sources.

6. The whole conversation was conducted in a most friendly spirit and Herr Kordt made his remonstrances more in sorrow than in anger, though there was doubtless a considerable amount of the latter commodity in Herr von Ribbentrop's instructions, from which Herr Kordt read from time to time when making his representations.

7. Incidentally, in the course of what was a long conversation, an opportunity was found of reminding Herr Kordt that, although I had written personally to Herr von Ribbentrop as long ago as July 28th, I had not yet received any reply to this letter.

8. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Representatives at Paris and Prague.

I am, &c.,  
HALIFAX

<sup>4</sup> No. 621.

*Viscount Halifax to Viscount Chilston (Moscow)*

No. 498 [C 8433/1941/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, August 17, 1938

My Lord,

The Soviet Ambassador called on me to-day on his return from leave. In regard to European affairs, his Excellency reported that there was a good deal of disappointment among members of the Russian Government at what he termed the undue weakness of the Western democracies. In the view of his Government, both we and the French were not firm enough with Germany, in whose policy there was at least 50 per cent. of bluff. The result was that this produced an exaggerated impression of German strength both in Germany and abroad, which constituted a real danger for peace. The crisis in May had been surmounted by the effect exercised on the German mind by the Franco-Czechoslovak and Russo-Czechoslovak treaties and by the *démarche* of this country. It was of great importance that an absolutely firm front should be shown to Germany and Italy, who were by no means so strong as they would have us believe. I told the Ambassador that we had defined our position to Parliament on the 24th March, and that there was no question of our varying what had been there said. M. Maisky regretted that we had not found it possible to be more precise, and said that, if any German attack was made on Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Government would, in his phrase, 'certainly do their bit'.

2. His Excellency asked me what news we had of Lord Runciman's progress in Prague. I told him that we received no regular reports from Lord Runciman, but I had had one or two letters from him in which he said that of which we were indeed already well aware, namely that the problem set him was one of immense difficulty. He had, however, given me to believe that one or two of the principal Sudetendeutsch leaders had led him to form the opinion that they themselves did want to reach a settlement. Whether this would or would not be possible, I supposed, would largely depend on what might be the real wishes of Berlin. On this point I told the Ambassador that I did not pretend to be able to form any very secure judgment, inasmuch as the ultimate decision rested with Herr Hitler, and it was impossible to predict what his final decisions might be. For example, it was unquestioned that the military measures now being taken in Germany were causing a great deal of disquiet and might well presage very ugly developments. They were, on the other hand, patient of less dangerous interpretation, and only time would show which interpretation was the correct one.

3. His Excellency, in a reference to Poland, said that the relations between his Government and Poland were not cordial, or even always correct, as the Poles, from time to time, were responsible for minor frontier troubles, and he feared that M. Beck's policy was drifting more and more towards the German camp.

I am, &c.,  
HALIFAX

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 18, 1.20 p.m.)

*No. 369 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 8446/65/18]*

BERLIN, August 18, 1938

Your telegram No. 316.<sup>1</sup>

I would beg, with all the earnestness at my command, that no communication should yet be made to French Government however confidentially. Please see in this connexion my private letter to you of August 17<sup>2</sup> which should reach you today.

It was only by mere chance that I was able to get hold of Dr. Lammers and communicate memorandum through him. He is no longer in Berlin and only alternative now would be to speak to Minister for Foreign Affairs or State Secretary who has just returned from leave. I am seeing latter some time today and may learn from him what the Chancellor's reactions were, though it is probable that in view of the channel employed Ministry may not know or profess not to know what they were.

French Government are aware of representations made here by Military Attaché and myself and are at least as well informed as we are of importance and dangers of German military measures. I am still not without hope that Herr Hitler is taking our remonstrances to heart and he may yet do what he can to lessen the repercussions which these measures are calculated to provoke. It is inconceivable that he should call off these manœuvres altogether. I do not see what particular object would be gained by notifying French Government (with inevitable indiscretions in the press later) whereas I regard it as entirely premature to notify German Government that we have

<sup>1</sup> No. 630.

<sup>2</sup> Sir N. Henderson wrote two letters to Viscount Halifax on August 17. In the first letter he suggested that he could come to London for consultation at a few hours' notice. In the second letter (to which this telegram evidently refers) he summed up once more his views on the situation. He wrote: 'Of course, once one has made up one's mind that now that Austria is one with Germany, the Sudeten must inevitably sooner or later come into Germany also, the surgical operation would be in the better interests of everybody, even of the patient. That is the tragedy of it all. I wonder if Runciman would get out of Prague alive, if he said so. If I were he, I know quite well what I should say on general lines: "absolute autonomy for areas in which Germans predominate with Benes' minority law applicable in those areas. Self determining principle to be exercised if desired after X years." ' Sir N. Henderson then turned to the memorandum which he had been instructed to deliver, and wrote: 'I earnestly trust that you will see your way, whatever happens, not to announce publicly ever that you made the *démarche*. It may make all the difference in future, if we can prove that we can keep a secret.' Finally he asked: 'please do nothing to give the impression that we are working against the régime. It is unpopular here just now; no doubt of that and the very fact adds to the danger of a "coup" as a derivative [*sic*] in the eyes of Himmler and Clo. But any outside interference only produces the opposite effect to that which is intended.'

gone back on our assurances about secrecy . . .<sup>3</sup> last hope has vanished of getting a reply in any sense satisfactory from Herr Hitler.

I shall in consequence not make proposed communication to Ministry of Foreign Affairs unless reinstructed by you.

<sup>3</sup> The text is here uncertain.

No. 639

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 18, 7.0 p.m.)

No. 371 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 8482/65/18]

BERLIN, August 18, 1938

My telegram No. 369.<sup>1</sup>

When calling on State Secretary this morning I mentioned that I was hoping for early reply to memorandum which I had sent last week to the Chancellor.

State Secretary replied, as I would doubtless understand (i.e. his Minister's position in the matter) he was unable to give me any information on the subject or to interfere in any way. He had, he said, no idea of the Chancellor's views. The latter was in Berlin at the moment in between visits to various army units.

Speaking personally, he justified measures on military grounds and pointed out if we objected to them on political grounds remedy lay rather in finding a way to relieve the political tension.

See my telegram immediately following.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No. 638.

<sup>2</sup> No. 640.

No. 640

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 18, 7.15 p.m.)

No. 372 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 8487/1941/18]

BERLIN, August 18, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

In speaking about relieving the political tension and after considerable argument about the unwisdom of German military measures in the midst of the present crisis, State Secretary asked whether I had any news as to the progress of Lord Runciman's mission. I told him I had none whatever and that in view of the independent character of Lord Runciman's task none were to be expected until his mind had been made up. State Secretary then asked whether it was to be anticipated Lord Runciman would make an interim report to His Majesty's Government and I replied again that I had no idea what form his recommendations might take or when they might be

<sup>1</sup> No. 639.

here. All I asked was that the German Government should be patient. The State Secretary retorted that they had been patient now for nearly four months and that so far as he could see there had been no advance of any real kind. While I argued to the contrary this is of course the German view and Herr Kundt's speech<sup>2</sup> at Prague yesterday may be taken as representing the general German attitude.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>2</sup> See No. 642 and No. 668, note 2.

#### No. 641

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 227 Telegraphic [C 8277/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *August 18, 1938, 10.0 p.m.*

After careful consideration of your telegrams Nos. 442<sup>1</sup> and 443<sup>2</sup> I have come to the conclusion that it would be undesirable that observers should be mixed up in cases of this sort. If therefore they are invited to investigate other such cases they should refuse on the ground that they do not appear to be incidents covered by their terms of reference.

<sup>1</sup> No. 618.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. See No. 628, note 2.

#### No. 642

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 18)*

*No. 453 Telegraphic [C 8456/4770/18]*

PRAGUE, *August 18, 1938*

The semi-official 'Prager Presse' dismisses yesterday's meeting between the Government and the Sudeten German party's representatives with a very brief communiqué, stating that it was agreed to continue the negotiations. The 'Zeit' (Sudeten German) deals with the meeting at much greater length.

The 'Zeit' article says that Deputy Kundt's reply to the President of the Council began by recapitulating the history of the contacts between the Government and the party. The party's delegation had communicated to Dr. Hodza on 7th June their well-known sketch, but it was not until 10th August that the President of the Council had made known the Nationality Statute in its final form. It was, therefore, not the fault of the Sudeten German party if detailed negotiations had not been begun sooner. The President of the Council's assurance that both the party's sketch and the Government's proposals would not only in theory but also in practice form a common basis of negotiations stood in contradiction to the negative attitude which had been adopted by the Government and the Coalition Committee to the sketch. The Government's proposals were, in reality, in crass contradiction to the contents of the sketch, since they were based on an entirely different conception of the nature of the State. It was, therefore, the more

important, if agreement was to be reached, not to discuss the proposals paragraph by paragraph, but to discuss the difference of conception and how a common point of view could be arrived at on the basis of which question of detail could be settled.

Herr Kundt's reply continued that, although the result of the discussions with the Government showed that there was the same gap (described in another passage as unbridgeable) between the points of view of the Government and of the party as there had been at the beginning of the conversations, the party was still ready to negotiate over the reconstruction of the State in order to solve the nationalities problem and thereby the State crisis on the basis of the eight Karlsbad demands. At the same time, it must be pointed out that the patience of the Sudeten population, which had not received any token of goodwill from the side of the Government, was less than the patience of the party's delegation. If Czech organisations and persons and Czech Government newspapers have [*sic*] no evidence of goodwill and outbid each other in attacks against the Sudeten Germans, it could be no matter for surprise if the latter became increasingly distrustful.

Referring to the Czechoslovak officers' manifesto, Herr Kundt said that this was in direct contradiction to the Government's assurances and had not been officially disavowed. Negotiations could only be continued if goodwill was shown in the attitude of the Czech press, Czech organisations and State organs, and if the Government and the Coalition parties took the necessary measures to create the psychological preconditions.

Other points in Herr Kundt's reply were:—

- (1) That the Government's proposals took special care to protect the Czechs who had been planted in the German area since 1918, but the Sudeten Germans could not be expected to recognise the results of the Czechisation of the German homeland.
- (2) That the Government's proposals still proceeded from the conception of a Czech National State, and even the provincial self-administration proposed would leave the non-Czech races at the mercy of a Czech majority. It would later be shown that the national 'Curia' would make no difference in that respect.
- (3) That the Sudeten German party did not wish to destroy Parliament and the central Ministries, but to ensure that the interests of racial groups were properly safeguarded within them.

Repeated to Berlin Saving.

#### No. 643

*Letter from Viscount Halifax to Viscount Runciman*

[C 8510/1941/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, August 18, 1938

Thank you very much for your several letters which I was very glad to get. It is very good of you to find time to write and they are most interesting. I have shown them to the Prime Minister.

I gather from Gwatkin's recent telegrams to Strang that you have now completed the informatory stage of your mission and are now embarked on the real business of mediation.

I was delighted that August 12th brought you a dash of hope! and you have been very busy since then. If you do succeed in throwing any planks across the gulf, you will have done more for the world than is given to many to do, and I am not at all disposed to let go the hope of your finding a way through. Certainly if you can't, no one else could!

As far as the day to day developments are concerned, I think the periodic telegrams from Gwatkin to Strang will be the most convenient method of keeping us posted over here. But I shall be very grateful if from time to time you may be able to supplement these more or less detailed accounts by an occasional letter to myself, in which you can give your general impression as to the course of your discussions, and as to the general line you are trying to take in regard to them. The double channel would be most useful to us here, and you need not fear that it would affect the independent character of your mission! Incidentally as you will have seen from my telegram to Newton of the 11th instant, No. 222,<sup>1</sup> we must also try to keep the French posted as to the general course of progress of your discussions, but in doing so we have always to bear in mind that anything said to the French is pretty likely to leak. So I think discretion is suggested in what we say to them.

There seems to be an idea prevalent in several quarters that you will in the event of a deadlock draw up yourself a definite scheme and put it to both parties. Bonnet has this idea as was shown in Campbell's telegram No. 505 Saving<sup>2</sup> and Henderson, who has written to me recently several private letters on the subject of your mission as seen from the German angle, is greatly afraid that Hitler's patience is well-nigh exhausted and that unless you have produced a settlement by the time the Parteitag meets about September 5th, he will proceed to take the law into his own hands! But I need not elaborate Henderson's forebodings for I see that he has now summarized them in his letter to Newton of August 11th,<sup>3</sup> which is to be shown to you. From the

<sup>1</sup> No. 607.

<sup>2</sup> No. 601.

<sup>3</sup> In this letter Sir N. Henderson transmitted copies of his recent letters to Viscount Halifax and summed up his views briefly in these words: 'It is impossible to *know* anything for certain in a régime where all depends on the will of a single individual whom one does not see and whom few people see and who makes his own decisions. One must be guided by intuition to a great extent.

'The Germans have all along never believed that Benes meant to go far enough. They disregard his difficulties. No German sees any point but his own. They would not have waited so long if it had not been for Hitler's own lingering belief in British impartiality and realism and particularly in the Prime Minister and Lord Halifax.

'They anticipated the failure of the negotiations for August but the Runciman mission provided a respite. They are now prepared to give him his chance and to give him roughly a month to make up his mind what he should recommend. They are now anticipating, since they still believe that Benes will never go far enough, the tug-of-war for September. The fortification of the Siegfried line and the military measures, calling up of reservists in September, are the definite indication of this. Failing any pronouncement on the part of Lord Runciman before the first week of September (the Nuremberg rally) Hitler will say

talks we had before you left for Prague, I never supposed that you intended yourself to draw up a scheme which you would invite the two parties to accept. I would have thought indeed that this would be too much in the nature of arbitration and that as you made clear when you accepted this position, you did not intend in any way so to act.

For my own edification, I have been pondering the different courses open to you, as the business proceeds.

You might, I suppose, in default of agreement, put forward a compromise scheme which each party would have to accept or reject, and from which would emerge a situation where one side or the other would be put definitely in the wrong. Or you might, without putting forward any plan of your own, draw up a report in which you would review the situation generally and assess the blame for a deadlock, but in either case you would seem to be putting yourself in the position of pronouncing judgment, and I must confess that I see great danger, as I fancy would you, in your doing this, either directly or indirectly, in view of the effect such a judgment might have upon the German, the Czech or the French Governments, or the embarrassments in certain circumstances that it might cause to us. For instance, if you were to put forward a plan of your own, one or other of the parties might accept it on condition that its observance was guaranteed by His Majesty's Government!

No doubt the simplest course open to you in the case of deadlock would be merely to declare that your effort at mediation had failed and therefore your mission must be considered as terminated. The disadvantage of this course would be that such a declaration, standing by itself, would probably by reaction precipitate an acute crisis and might tempt the German Government to immediate action.

But before reaching this point I have imagined that you might try to mitigate or delay the impending crisis by recommending that at any rate those points on which agreement had been reached should be brought immediately into force, provisionally and experimentally, and without prejudice to the conflicting claims of both parties with regard to other points on which the deadlock had been reached. In order to keep the door open for a further thereat: "The British intervention has failed: we were right when we said—as we always did—that Benes never meant business or that his extremists did not intend to allow him to mean business. We cannot permit the present situation to drift on into the winter. You accused us of military concentrations in May. It was a lie. But now it is true. We are ready for war: if France attacks our Siegfried line we are ready for her and she will pay dearly for her intervention—four men to our one, at least. But we shall stand on the defensive in the West and will only defend ourselves there if we are attacked. So far as Czechoslovakia is concerned our troops are ready and our reserves with the colours. We seek a peaceable solution: we are not to-day asking for an Anschluss but we are for the right of our fellow-Germans in Czechoslovakia to live their own life and to enjoy the right of self-determination, which the Western Powers have admitted for everybody except Germans. That is the position: we are ready to fight if we must. What are you, France and England, going to do about it?"

"The above is what is likely if Lord Runciman has failed to conjure up a compromise by September."



attempt at a settlement, if you were not able to find means of doing it yourself in some way, it has been suggested that the points, on which no agreement had been reached, should form the subject of negotiations between the Powers chiefly concerned, but, if such a proposal were seriously to be made, it would raise at once the acute question of who were to be considered as 'the Powers chiefly concerned'. Czechoslovakia, Germany, France and Great Britain? or these, plus Poland, Hungary, Italy and Russia?

And lastly there is the possibility of trying to resolve the deadlock by means of a plebiscite. But to me, though it appeals to Noel Buxton and the Dean of St. Paul's, the plebiscite idea has always seemed the devil, and as likely to precipitate as to prevent a crisis. I do not rule it out of my mind as a last resort, and it may, I can imagine, easily come into the open; but the difficulties, which by now will be much more familiar to you than to me, have always seemed to me enormous.

I should very much like to know how you yourself visualise the possibilities, of what you might or might not do, in the event of reaching stalemate!

In the meanwhile do you see any chance of your labours producing any result, either positive or negative before the Nürnberg Parteitag? I do not want to suggest that because we are told that Hitler is going to give you a month in which to produce a result and is then going to 'lose patience', therefore you must strain every nerve to produce a result of some sort within this time limit. There may indeed be a great deal to be said for precisely the opposite course, for it may be equally argued that with you still in Prague it would be extremely difficult for Hitler to declare publicly that he has waited long enough and is going to take the law into his own hands! But I imagine that your course of action must be largely dictated by developments during the next few weeks.

And, as to these, it has been again suggested to us that if some sort of minor measures of satisfaction and appeasement could be produced at once, this might be very useful. I know Newton does not think much of the specific suggestions which we made to him in our telegram No. 212<sup>4</sup> but perhaps there are others which occur to him and to you now that you have got a general view of the situation. I am glad at any rate to see from the postscript to your letter of the 12th<sup>5</sup> that a beginning has been made by Benes promising to issue soon a statement about throwing open State appointments to more Sudeten-deutschen. I only hope that Benes will not merely promise but will also perform.

In your letter of the 10th<sup>6</sup> you ask how long in my opinion you ought to hold the fort. I still find it hard to believe that, short of some quite unexpected 'incident', Hitler will proceed to military action so long as you are engaged on your mission, but if he does I quite agree that you ought to come away as soon as it is clear that he means business, for then your job would evidently be finished! There is always too the possibility that Hitler may say something so outrageous at the Parteitag as to make your continued presence in

<sup>4</sup> No. 559.

<sup>5</sup> No. 611, but the reference is apparently in error for Lord Runciman's letter of August 10 (No. 602) which has a postscript.

<sup>6</sup> No. 602.

Czechoslovakia as mediator impossible! But these are all speculations.

The general situation and your position in particular have not I fear been improved by the German Government's decision to stage a test mobilisation in the immediate future and for an indeterminate period. By the time this letter reaches you this decision may have produced further repercussions, but in the meantime ask Newton to show you, if he has not already done so, the message we sent last Thursday via Henderson to Hitler direct on this subject. For the present we are keeping this *démarche* as secret as possible and have not even told the French.

I apologise for the length of this discursive letter. I would give a good deal for the gift of crystal-gazing just now, and could then have written much more shortly!

All good luck. I hope you and Lady Runciman and all your party are well and not finding the heat too trying.

Yours ever,  
HALIFAX

Perhaps, if you think well, you would show this letter to Newton.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> A copy of this letter was sent to Sir N. Henderson on August 18.

No. 644

*Letter from Viscount Runciman to Viscount Halifax*  
[C 9601/1941/18]

LORD RUNCIMAN'S MISSION, August 18, 1938

Since I wrote you last week the process of examination and interview has proceeded stage by stage. You can see from 'The Times' how I have been dealing with the situation and its prominent people day by day. I have seen nearly everybody who matters in each of the seven parties and a number of persons who have influence in this mixed little world. So far I have gained the confidence, I believe, of both sides and they all come to see me from time to time. We discuss their points of view freely, but I cannot say that we are able to record any progress with the building of the bridge. In a country with seven parties and at least five races, no leader is safe from the risks of desertion or opposition or complicated troubles, so that I am not in a position to report any advance towards agreement or even closer relations. The Government and I have a curious almost unique relationship: they accept my advice and in some particulars they act on it; they seem to welcome suggestions made by me for the better government of their country—*without at any time standing on their dignity*. I am something less than a Dictator and more than an Adviser. I see the Prime Minister every other day and the President when necessary, as well as those of their colleagues who are at their elbow, not taking in some cases a very wide view!

Newton is excellent and he gives me help in very many ways. Gwatkin also is excellent. Geoffrey Peto is a hard worker and for the jobs which come in here (or in the country) is invaluable. Stopford is an adaptable officer and I am glad we brought him with us.

The hours are prolonged and the work is enough to wear out young men as well as old. At present I cannot see more than ten days ahead. The whole business would be simpler if we had no one on our flank! All I can do is to mark time and remember our objective. If by a miracle an Agreement was reached I would be astonished, but if not, it will not be for lack of effort and perseverance. In this climate I must confess to feeling tired at the end of every day—except Sunday! Insomnia is spoiling my nights.

Yours ever,  
W. R.

No. 645

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 19, 4.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 454 Telegraphic [C 8534/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 19, 1938, 2.15 p.m.

My telegram No. 453.<sup>1</sup>

I have now seen full text of Herr Kundt's statement and observe that after saying object of present discussions was to discover whether or not a common basis for negotiation existed, he continued (? that)<sup>2</sup> even if no such basis were found 'this need not mean that we therefore wish to make pessimistic forecast but merely look every possibility realistically in face'.

Herr Kundt seems therefore to have been at pains not to slam the door though there was nothing in his statement to suggest Sudeten German Party were prepared to abate their demands.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 642.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

No. 646

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 19, 5.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 455 Telegraphic [C 8535/4786/18]*

PRAGUE, August 19, 1938, 2.15 p.m.

I learn from a reliable source that the Czechoslovak Government have decided under the pressure of events to re-examine question of three years military service. A decision will probably be taken next week or in ten days.

Repeated to Berlin.

No. 647

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received August 19, 2.30 p.m.)*  
*No. 375 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 8504/65/18]*

BERLIN, August 19, 1938

My telegram No. 369.<sup>1</sup>

1. After anxious reflection and with deep sense of responsibility I feel it my duty to explain in greater detail my reasons for hoping you will not

<sup>1</sup> No. 638.

decide to inform the French Government at this stage of memorandum which you instructed me to communicate to Herr Hitler.

2. It must have taken the German War Office at least several months to prepare this 'test mobilization'. The decision to do so was probably taken immediately after May 21 or even quite possibly after march into Austria which showed up defects of sudden unprepared mobilization. It is quite inconceivable that short of a definite threat of war they should be cancelled now. The most that the Chancellor for inner political reasons can and may still possibly do is to announce publicly their exact extent and limit or spread their scope in certain respects so as to reduce feeling of uneasiness abroad as to his intentions.

3. We shall probably not know for certain for at least some ten days whether he has made any attempt to go halfway to meet us in this respect.

4. Admiral Horthy's visit begins on August 21 and lasts for ten days and Nuremberg festival begins five days later and lasts till September 12. There will be no precipitate action during this period.

5. Whether we tell the French now or in ten days time or so when we are certain that our *démarche* has failed of its object cannot, in my opinion, make any difference so far as gravity of the situation is concerned. The facts are there for all to see. On the other hand the least hint in the press of action which we took will only make it definitely impossible for Herr Hitler to modify in any way military measures previously arranged. Already, as I have reported, the indiscretions in the French press as regards representations made by Military Attaché and myself here have compromised our chances of his listening to our advice.

6. The moment to speak to French Government, if ever, will be when it is seen that our intervention has completely failed and even then I would most urgently recommend that method used be not communicated to them. It would be less harmful if they were for instance told that I had been instructed to make communication to German Government and not to the Chancellor in person.

7. We cannot but infer from silence of the Chancellor that he has taken our remonstrances badly. It was not to be anticipated that he would welcome them but there is still the chance so long as we keep them secret that he will heed them to some though in any case limited extent. Our own silence now will keep him guessing more than display of nervous anxiety such as communication to French Government would indicate. We would be playing the German game if these manœuvres are a bluff and we would be gaining nothing if they are not.

8. Nor do I imagine that His Majesty's Government consider the time has come for a definite threat of war which we would have to implement if it failed. It may come after Nuremberg if there has been no pronouncement of any kind from Lord Runciman before that date or it may come after he has made a pronouncement which Sudetens may regard as incompatible with their aspirations.

9. The situation is far too earnest to permit merely of lectures which irritate

but which produce nothing. The attitude of the French Government in this matter seems to me more politic and more likely to be effective than our own. Any public announcement (since there would almost inevitably be some leakage in France) of our appeal to Herr Hitler and of its failure would merely tend to intensify the present tension in Europe.

10. I may be wrong but I feel it is also an inescapable duty to give you in this connexion my opinion on the situation as I see it.

11. Herr Hitler may have and probably has given order that Germany is to be a hundred per cent. ready for war by the middle of September. All war rumours have their origin therefrom. If he has done so it is quite apart from military efficiency with object of obliterating impression of defeat caused by events of May 21 and in order to achieve his aims by display of force. But I do not believe he wants war or that short of a situation in which it is forced on him that he will resort to war.

12. In my opinion the chief danger of war lies not in Herr Hitler himself who would be risking more than anyone else but in the forces working for war, namely German and Czech extremists, communists and other influences and the universal hatred abroad of Nazism. I believe if we saw any utility in war, now would be the moment to make it rather than later. Anyway most Germans feel this and if war ensued Dr. Goebbels would have little difficulty in convincing the vast majority of the German nation that the world was forcing a preventive war on Germany.

13. If my view of the position is correct it seems to me that our objective should be not to drive Herr Hitler into a situation where his prestige being at stake he would feel himself obliged to yield to his extremists. However much Germans spoil it by their tactics, their case as regards Sudeten is objectively a strong one. Patience is a relative term. Herr Hitler undoubtedly regards the four months of British intervention at Prague, with nothing appreciable to show at the end of it, as long enough. He has said he cannot wait indefinitely. No one anticipates cut and dried scheme which would take many months to elaborate. But every German, even the most moderate, fails to see why the big lines of a recommendation in principle should not be laid down now. If we wish to avoid putting Herr Hitler into a position from which he may find it difficult to extricate himself some indication on the part of Lord Runciman as to lines on which he is working should be made known in some form or other before September. This seems to me essential from point of view of Czech public no less than of German.

No. 648

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 319 Telegraphic [C 8446/65/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *August 19, 1938, 5.30 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 369.<sup>1</sup>

You will readily understand that if, as is probable, the French Govern-

<sup>1</sup> No. 638.

ment in the near future approach me on the subject of present German military measures, it will be quite impossible for me to discuss the situation with them without at once revealing frankly to them the fact I have already made an appeal to the German Government on this subject. I had intended to anticipate such an approach by telling them of the action I had taken in advance and of my own volition, since I naturally did not want to give the French Government the impression that I had not intended to take them into my confidence and that they were extorting this information against my will.

2. However I am prepared, in view of your strong representations, to modify your instructions in the sense that you need only tell the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that I foresee that at any moment the French Government may raise with me the question of the German military measures and that if and when they do so I shall be bound to tell them of the appeal I have made. I should, however, give only a very general outline of the message you delivered to Herr Hitler and I should not speak of it as being made to Herr Hitler personally but only to the German Government.

3. In your telegram you allude to our going back on the assurance you gave to Herr Lammers about secrecy. That we had not told the French Government of our *démarche* was a statement of fact and in no sense an assurance, and I could not possibly allow myself to be bound by a pledge not to inform the French Government of this or any other action I might take in the common interests of our two countries. Nor must we assume in our dealings with the German Government that confidential communication to the French Government is tantamount to the abandonment of secrecy.

No. 649

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 19, 7.0 p.m.)

No. 378 *Telegraphic: by telephone [C 8519/1941/19]*

BERLIN, August 19, 1938

Italian Ambassador, whom I saw by chance last night for a few moments, told me he had just received an account of conversation which Italian Chargé d'Affaires in London had had with Sir Orme Sargent on or about August 12 on the subject of Lord Runciman's negotiations.

While agreeing with general appreciation of the situation as described by Sir Orme Sargent, the Ambassador expressed the utmost consternation at suggestion that Lord Runciman might contemplate stopping at Prague three months at least and probably more before arriving at any agreed solution.

As the Ambassador was leaving Berlin this morning he sent his Counsellor to see me with text of record of conversation in question with instructions to impress upon me most seriously the following points which constituted his personal opinion.

Everybody in Germany was waiting with the utmost anxiety for some

expression of views on the part of Herr Hitler at Nuremberg, which was the one occasion in the year when Herr Hitler spoke to the whole nation. Absolute silence on the part of Lord Runciman would place Herr Hitler in a very difficult position. Situation was far too dangerous for a policy of 'wait and see' and a word before then was in his opinion absolutely necessary if present tension was to be relieved and if the Chancellor was to be prevented from making statements which he would later be unable to withdraw.

I gathered that the Ambassador intended to report in the above sense to Rome. I told the Ambassador that I personally shared his anxieties in this respect and had reported so to you. At the same time I laid stress on complete independence of Lord Runciman and necessity of giving him time to form a considered and unbiased judgment.

The Ambassador's agitation at dangers of delay was very striking.

Repeated to Paris, Prague and Rome.

No. 650

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 19, 7.15 p.m.)

*No. 376 Telegraphic: by telephone [G 8546/65/18]*

BERLIN, August 19, 1938

Military Attaché saw General Tippleskirch, Chief of Intelligence at Ministry of War, this morning. Military Attaché opened conversation by pointing out that foreign press were in some cases attributing greater significance to German military manoeuvres this autumn than would appear to be justified by information previously given him by Ministry of War. He asked if he could be given the same detailed information of locality, scope, and nature of these manoeuvres as is normally procured by the press of other countries when dealing with such a subject. The General said he could not give exact information as regards military measures at present in progress. It was not worth his while making detailed enquiries on Military Attaché's behalf as he was quite certain that detailed information would not be given. He confirmed the fact that the scope of measures now in progress was as outlined to Military Attaché in his previous talks on the subject at Ministry of War. He said that care must be taken not to exaggerate the number of reservists being called up. Active formations require very few reservists to complete to war strength, and number of reserve formations being embodied was limited. He stressed the unsatisfactory state of affairs in Austria and doubted whether it would be possible to do much in the way of embodying reserve formations in that country. The large quantity of material of all kinds which had admittedly been streaming into Austria by road and rail was the least amount required to make Austrian army effective. Contrary to previous information on this point he said many of the reservists being called up were of 'E' type who have only done short time reserve training. The General was at great pains to explain how necessary from military point of view the measures now

in progress are. He said the only reason that French did not take similar measures on a similar scale was fact that they unhappily for them suffered from democratic government. He refused to admit that German military programme this autumn could be regarded as a disturbing factor in the admittedly very tense European situation. Really serious factors were of a very different kind. It was quite false to assume that measures now being taken were preliminaries to military action against Czechoslovakia. On the other hand as a soldier the Military Attaché would understand that in view of present critical situation German army must clearly do all it can to be 100 per cent. ready for eventualities. Everything this year had come with a rush. The 'Anschluss' had come like a bolt from the blue owing to Dr. Schuschnigg's ill-advised action and German army naturally had at the moment to work at abnormal speed in order to cope with possibilities of a situation which had been created by 6½ millions of Germans in Austria now being Reich Germans, while their 3½ million fellow Germans of old Austrian Empire were still clamouring without very much hope for the same right. The General gave no indication that he knew of our recent communication to Herr Hitler and the Military Attaché naturally made no reference to it. Military Attaché made it clear that as a soldier he quite understood the force of the General's arguments and that his sole wish was to be able to give me the exactest possible information to enable me to appreciate the situation correctly in face of the many rumours which are now current. General Tippleskirch was most friendly throughout the interview and gave no indication of ill-feeling. He was, however, manifestly more than perturbed by present situation and said he found it very hard to see daylight.

#### No. 651

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received August 19, 10.30 p.m.)*

*No. 457 Telegraphic [C 8536/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 19, 1938, 7.40 p.m.

Following from Ashton-Gwatkin for Strang:

Press has just published contents of letter from Dr. Hodza to Lord Runciman announcing in response to Lord Runciman's enquiry appointment of officials of Sudeten German nationality to some posts of importance in postal and internal administrations, also under Ministry of Justice and perhaps later under Ministries of Railways and Finance.

These are first fruits of mission. Importance of course should not be exaggerated and Henlein despises though he does not reject it—see my telegram No. 458.<sup>1</sup> But so far as it goes it is a good sign.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 652.



No. 652

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 20, 9.30 a.m.)  
No. 458 Telegraphic [C 8537/1941/18]

PRAGUE, August 19, 1938, 7.40 p.m.

My telegram No. 457.<sup>1</sup>

Following from Ashton-Gwatkin for Strang.

Lord Runciman had an hour's talk with Henlein<sup>2</sup> yesterday—friendly but uncompromising. Henlein did however say:

- (1) (? He)<sup>3</sup> wishes to find solution by negotiation,
- (2) and within present frontier of Czechoslovakia
- (3) and to maintain international peace
- (4) and to keep his people quiet.

He fears however that if some satisfaction is not soon forthcoming especially with the unemployment and suffering of a bad winter he may lose his influence and be no longer able to restrain them. Dr. Hodza's offer of seven post offices etc. (see my telegram No. 457), he regarded as contemptible when '50,000 Germans have lost their posts'. He asks for wide gesture by the Government in the form of a decree:

- (a) providing for a restoration of the posts.
- (b) restoring career officials now in Czech districts to Sudetenland. Gendarmerie should be withdrawn, they are a public danger; and general settlement should aim at placing and keeping Czechs and Germans as far apart as possible.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 651.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix II.

<sup>3</sup> The text is here uncertain.

No. 653

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 20, 7.20 p.m.)  
No. 381 Telegraphic [C 8548/1941/18]

BERLIN, August 20, 1938, 4.43 p.m.

French Air Mission under General Vuillemin has had good reception here and procedure followed has been exactly the same as in the recent case of Marshal Balbo.

At interview with the Chancellor General Vuillemin was impressed by the former's statesmanlike attitude and obvious sense of responsibility.

The opposite was the case in private conversation with Field-Marshal Göring. The latter had referred to Spain and Czechoslovakia as the sole remaining obstacles to Franco-German understanding. Spain was passed over without comment but Field-Marshal Göring asked General Vuillemin whether France really intended to come to the support of the Czechs if there was trouble. The General replied that he could tell him quite definitely on

behalf of his Government that the French Government were bound by their treaty and by honour to do so. Field-Marshal Göring was much perturbed and after unrestrained abuse of the Czechs argued that the treaty only envisaged the case of German aggression. It was the Czechs who were now provoking Germany and he said he had in his possession report of recent conference with Czech military chiefs recommending war now rather than in two years' time when German military machine would be better prepared for world war, if necessary.

The result of this conversation was to leave the impression behind in the mind of General Vuillemin that civilities extended to him merely cloaked attempt to detach France from Czechoslovakia and leave Germany free hand in Central Europe.

Repeated to Paris.

No. 654

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 20, 7.0 p.m.)  
No. 382 Telegraphic [C 8549/65/18]

BERLIN, August 20, 1938, 4.43 p.m.

I received your telegram No. 319<sup>1</sup> this morning just before calling on State Secretary and I took this opportunity of speaking to him confidentially on lines of paragraph 2 therein.

I told Baron von Weizsäcker that I appreciated his reluctance to be involved in this matter but I should be glad if he would mention this privately to Dr. Lammers who I understood would be, together with Doctor [*sic*] von Weizsäcker, accompanying the Chancellor to Kiel tomorrow to meet the Regent of Hungary.

There should be no harm in this, as I never gave Dr. Lammers in the first place any assurance that you would never inform the French Government nor naturally do I . . .<sup>2</sup> assume elsewhere that confidential communications to the French Government are rarely treated as such. My attitude with Dr. Lammers was that you were keeping your communication secret in the hope that publicity would not make it more difficult for the Chancellor to take such action as might be possible to diminish apprehensions which German military measures might provoke.

Personally I still hope that the French Government will not raise the question with you: at any rate so long as there is any hope that something may be done to allay those apprehensions.

<sup>1</sup> No. 648.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

No. 655

*Mr. Campbell (Paris) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 22)

*No. 524 Saving: Telegraphic [C 8540/1941/18]*

PARIS, August 20, 1938

The French Government have received a preliminary report from General Vuillemin according to which Field-Marshal Göring asked him what would happen if Germany were compelled to take forcible action against Czechoslovakia. The General answered that France would go to Czechoslovakia's help: she had treaty obligations which she could not break. Field-Marshal Göring had shown great 'disappointment' but had remarked that if the Czechs were the aggressors, the French obligations would not come into play.

In telling me of the foregoing this morning, the Political Director said the obvious inference was that Germany hoped (a) that events would develop in such a way that she could make Czechoslovakia appear as the aggressor, and (b) that if this could be engineered, France could be put in a position in which, if she considered that Germany was clearly the real aggressor and if she felt bound to go to her ally's assistance, she could not expect British help.

M. Massigli thought that the French Government and His Majesty's Government would need to watch carefully for an attempt at such a manœuvre for the isolation of France, all the more so since the Ministry had information (not yet however confirmed) that the Germans were working for an insurrection by the Sudeten helped by infiltrated German Nazis. Events following Czech action to suppress an insurrection might well give the Germans an opportunity to allege Czech aggression. The extensive and prolonged German military manœuvres might be intended to enable the German Government to exert the maximum of political pressure whenever they thought the moment opportune or to take immediate military advantage of a situation of the kind above referred to. In this connexion the exertion of increased German influence at Burgos (see my telegram No. 527 Saving<sup>1</sup>) might in M. Massigli's opinion have considerable significance.

M. Massigli said that nothing of the slightest interest had passed at the interview between General Vuillemin and Herr Hitler.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram reported information reaching the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs of a considerable increase of German influence over General Franco's Government in Spain.

No. 656

*Mr. Campbell (Paris) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 22)

*No. 525 Saving: Telegraphic [C 8550/4786/18]*

PARIS, August 20, 1938

I was today told in confidence by the Political Director that the French Government had recently been urging on the Czechoslovak Government the

view that it would be unwise for them to bring in a law establishing a three-years military service. The French Government had said that they fully understood Czech anxieties in the face of the German Government's attitude and the latest German military measures, but that they considered that legislation of the kind at this juncture could be represented as provocative and would be correspondingly risky. They had suggested therefore that it would be better to meet the situation by retaining with the colours the class which was due to be disbanded at (I think) the end of September. This course would not only appear less exceptional but, if its announcement was withheld until the right moment, would also have the advantage of appearing as a legitimate response to action of a similar kind by the German Government, who it was understood were going shortly to prolong the service of certain classes.

I understand that the French Chargé d'Affaires has been instructed to inform you of the foregoing.

No. 657

*Mr. Campbell (Paris) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 22)

*No. 526 Saving: Telegraphic [C 8539/1941/18]*

PARIS, August 20, 1938

I gave the Political Director this morning a copy of the note on the progress of Lord Runciman's mission, which was sent to the French Chargé d'Affaires by Sir O. Sargent on August 16. M. Massigli told me that, according to a report from the French Representative at Prague, President Benes had been greatly impressed by Lord Runciman who had inspired him with much confidence by his fairminded and statesmanlike outlook. M. Massigli mentioned this to me because it was of such evident importance that the Czech politicians should be amenable to His Lordship's influence.

No. 658

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 21, 9.0 p.m.)

*No. 385 Telegraphic [C 8595/1941/18]*

BERLIN, August 21, 1938, 6.55 p.m.

My despatch No. 863.<sup>1</sup>

Military Attaché saw his informant again today and was told that Herr Hitler had held a council at Döberitz last week which was attended by all commanding generals. Herr Hitler had announced his intention of attacking Czechoslovakia towards the end of September. Germany could expect no

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This despatch of August 17 enclosed an account of a conversation between the Military Attaché and an unnamed informant (apparently an army officer who had supported National Socialism but was now hostile to Herr Hitler). This informant was convinced that Herr Hitler intended to take military action in the autumn against Czechoslovakia.

more favourable moment. A magnificent harvest and practical certainty that France and England would not intervene as at any rate the latter was utterly unready for war. Russia was not worth considering. Opposition from the generals was necessarily half-hearted and decision to take action was agreed to. It is proposed to commence completing mobilization on September 15. Two corps will operate from Silesia but main thrust will come from Austria where large numbers of troops are already preparing secret concentration. Herr X. described the situation as being most critical as in point of fact a progressive general mobilization had already been started. German General Staff are staggered by the fact that it is being taken so quietly abroad. Normal life of the country is directly disorganized. Spirit of the people generally and of most of those called up for many different services is bad, and there is everywhere terror at the prospect of a catastrophe. Herr Hitler hopes for a very short war in a clear ring and a great initial success. This will give him unshakeable seat in the saddle for another ten years. But he reckons with possibility of a war of up to nine months' duration. His Defence Council and his economic advisers are at their wits' end. If by firm action abroad Herr Hitler can be forced at the eleventh hour to renounce his present intentions he will be unable to survive the blow. Similarly if it comes to war immediate intervention by France and England will . . .<sup>2</sup> bring about the downfall of the régime. We already know Herr X.'s attitude and his pronouncements are clearly biased and largely propaganda. There is, however, nothing illogical in the above information and in view of many other pointers it would be wise not to take it (? other than<sup>2</sup>) seriously.

Please inform War Office.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

No. 659

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received August 21, 9.0 p.m.)*

*No. 386 Telegraphic [C 8579/1941/18]*

BERLIN, August 21, 1938, 6.55 p.m.

During visit to Dresden by some of local Military Attachés in which Assistant Military Attaché took part he was spoken to privately by Head of Attaché Group. Latter was clearly delivering himself of a prepared statement and appeared most embarrassed. His principal points were:

Present situation is most dangerous. Solution to Sudeten question must be found with all speed. There has been much delay and stubbornness in Prague, and in Germany it is thought that consequences have been in great part due to the attitude of Great Britain. Germany is far more concerned with attitude of Great Britain than with that of France, as France will be sure to follow Britain's lead. It is thought in Germany that unless supported by the French and British the Czechs will not fight. He finished by saying that he hoped some good might result from Lord Runciman's Mission but

repeated that there must be a solution and a quick solution. Assistant Military Attaché was left with the impression that Head of Attaché Group was trying to convey to him that if a satisfactory solution to the Sudeten question could not be found in the immediate future, German General Staff had only one besetting doubt and ground for perturbation, and this lay in their uncertainty as to Britain's reaction to direct action.

Please inform War Office.

No. 660

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received August 21, 10.15 p.m.)*

*No. 387 Telegraphic [C 8572/65/18]*

BERLIN, August 21, 1938, 6.55 p.m.

Military Attaché visited area of Hanover-Soltau-Uemilen[? Ulzen]-Brunswick by road from Berlin on Friday and Saturday. Bulk of fuel used by military vehicles in Germany is mixture of petrol. Sale of fuels of this type in this area has been prohibited. Otherwise there were not many abnormal indications to be seen. A certain number of requisitioned private cars and horses and farm carts. Only very few reservists and Landwehr. Military Attaché skirted big training areas around Bergen and Münsterlager but noted no signs of abnormal activity. His general impression is that area as a whole is not at present affected by test mobilisation. Apart from what may be going on elsewhere, and especially in Bavaria and Austria, Military Attaché has reasonably good indications that following are amongst the areas affected or to be affected in the immediate future by test mobilisation: Jüterbog, Dresden, Eastern Pomerania.

Please inform War Office.

No. 661

*Letter from Herr von Ribbentrop to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received August 22)*

*[C 8711/1941/18]*

*Translation*

BERLIN, August 21, 1938

Dear Lord Halifax,

On returning from my holiday I have to thank you for your letter of the 28th July.<sup>1</sup> I should like to reply to you with the same frankness with which you wrote to me.

I note from your letter that it was your intention to inform the German Government of Lord Runciman's mission before it was announced in the press, and that this was only prevented through the indiscretion of certain English papers. You will agree with me that this does not in any way alter the actual position. Lord Runciman's mission was decided upon by the British Government in common with the French Government and the

<sup>1</sup> No. 556.

Czechoslovak Government without our participation. The Government of the Reich was only informed of it for the first time after the event. In these circumstances the Government of the Reich must refuse to take any responsibility for the efforts of Lord Runciman, whether they are crowned with success or not.

German policy can certainly claim substantial credit for the fact that it has allowed the Prague Government to negotiate undisturbed with the Sudeten Germans without any interference, although the negotiations have not up to the present shown the slightest progress owing to the completely incomprehensible intransigence of the Czechoslovaks. Naturally we in Germany cannot now collaborate in the execution of Lord Runciman's mission which came about without our participation.

The efforts which the British Government have made up to now in the Sudeten German question have unfortunately not been accompanied by success. On the contrary they have only strengthened the attitude of the Prague Government in its intransigence and aggressiveness. In fact there can now be no doubt that the attitude of the Prague Government, which is so strongly influenced by Bolshevik ideas, represents the only real obstacle to a settlement and pacification of Europe. I believe that world public opinion will come to realise this fact more clearly from day to day. In so far as this fact has not yet been completely recognised in some places, this is in my opinion to be attributed to the tendentious behaviour of a section of the international press which is engaged in giving to the public a completely false conception of the position in Czechoslovakia. I am convinced that this section of the press will not succeed in the long run in concealing the true position in Czechoslovakia, and I should welcome it if Lord Runciman's presence in Prague should have this effect and open the eyes of the English public.

At all events, one thing seems to me clear. As long as influential circles in Prague, although they are consciously pushing things to extremes, still hope for outside support, all efforts to induce them to an intelligent treatment of the legitimate Sudeten German demands will be in vain. I am convinced now as before that the only key to a clarification of the situation lies in this.

I must also take this opportunity to say quite frankly that the memorandum communicated by Sir N. Henderson on the 12th instant has given rise to the greatest astonishment here. Whatever there was to be said from the German side on the subject of the military measures, mentioned in that memorandum, had been communicated by our military authorities to your Military Attaché within the framework of the usual exchanges of information between them. It goes without saying that we cannot allow ourselves to enter upon any discussion about internal military measures.

You rightly emphasise the importance of the attitude of the press for further political developments. Unfortunately I must point out that it is just the English press which has recently almost completely failed to make whatever contribution it might have made to lessening the tension in the atmosphere and contributing to Anglo-German understanding. During recent months

there has hardly been a single political or diplomatic event concerning Anglo-German relations which the English press has not used in some way or another for indiscretions, imputations or completely false reports, in order systematically to discredit German policy. I should like once again to-day in all earnestness to direct your personal attention to this particular question.

I am glad that in your letter you speak of our different conversations in London at which we always envisaged as our common goal the establishment of good and friendly relations between Germany and Great Britain. I have never lost sight of this goal and am convinced that our two Governments, after a solution of the Sudeten German problem and a reasonable settlement of the colonial question, in the absence of any divergent interests, will arrive at a confident collaboration. In order that the way may be cleared for such a constructive policy it seems to me absolutely indispensable that there should be a complete change in the attitude of the English press towards Germany and that the desire which, in my opinion, prevails among the English people for an understanding with Germany, should find public expression.

With best wishes, I am, &c.,

RIBBENTROP

No. 662

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received August 22, 9.30 a.m.)*

*No. 388 Telegraphic [C 8587/1941/18]*

BERLIN, August 22, 1938, 12.32 a.m.

Lord Runciman's Mission.

I submit that it would scarcely seem more than [*sic*]<sup>1</sup> practicable or desirable for Lord Runciman to draw up and sponsor a definite scheme details of which it might take months to elaborate and for execution of which we might thereafter be held responsible.

On the other hand I feel most strongly that essential and immediate course should be some sort of public declaration on his part to the effect that after careful study of general principles he had come to conclusion that a just and lasting settlement could only be achieved on basis of say either:

(a) Cantonal system as in Switzerland or

(b) A Statute on lines proposed by M. Benes but much more generously conceived, or whatever other general basis between those extremes which Lord Runciman may regard as most appropriate. I must here state my conviction that no solution which can be stigmatized as minority treatment will be recognized as acceptable or permanent by Germany and I similarly fear that nothing is to be gained by piecemeal enforcement of minor concessions which Sudetens and Germans will and do regard as sops to avoid major issue and to throw dust in the eyes of foreigners. It is some pronouncement on major issue which is being awaited by moderates here with such anxiety

<sup>1</sup> The text here seems corrupt.



lest, if it be not made, extremists will run away with the machine and constrain Herr Hitler to compromise himself irrevocably at Nuremberg.

However unfair it may seem to press Lord Runciman for any immediate statement of his conception of what is a just settlement and however little one may sympathize with Herr Hitler's 'impatience' it is only just to bear in mind after first three months of steady pressure, M. Benes' only gesture was to produce and to propose to enforce a Statute which never had any hope of acceptance by either Sudetens or Germany and which consequently could only be maintained in force just so long as France and Great Britain were prepared to support Czechoslovakia in enforcing it.

That is the crux of the whole matter and the *impasse* out of which we must get if the end is not to be disastrous for all concerned either this year or in next year or so.

I find it hard to believe that Herr Hitler will actually attack Czechoslovakia so long as Lord Runciman is at Prague. On the other hand if no indication is given before Nuremberg of principles on which Lord Runciman is basing his plan of conciliation I fear Herr Hitler will at least steal a march on British intervention by publicly announcing, without necessarily making it *casus belli*, the only basis on which Germany will accept a settlement. What will then be Lord Runciman's position and ours?

We shall have lost the initiative and it is largely on these grounds that I urge some form of announcement or even calculated indiscretion on the part of Lord Runciman before the end of this month.

Whatever view we may hold, every German would regard Herr Hitler as entirely justified if at Nuremberg he were to say that Sudeten question could not be left in suspense any longer. He would refer to unfulfilled promises made by M. Benes a year and a half ago and would argue that, since in the course of the last four months neither the British Government nor British mediator had been able either to make M. Benes see reason or to make up their own minds on the question of principle he (Herr Hitler) felt himself obliged to make it up for them. On this platform Dr. Goebbels would find it easy to rally the whole country round the Führer.

I am not repeating this and similar telegrams to Prague unless otherwise instructed.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> This telegram was repeated to Prague by the Foreign Office. See No. 663.

### No. 663

*Sir N. Charles (Rome) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received August 22, 4.0 p.m.)*

*No. 552 Telegraphic [C 8626/1941/18]*

ROME, August 22, 1938, 2.10 p.m.

My telegram No. 176 Saving.<sup>1</sup>

I have again asked the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs his opinion

<sup>1</sup> No. 632.

about Czechoslovak affairs. He repeated that he felt sure that Germany did not desire war but that the situation was 'very serious'. The matter rested entirely in the hands of Czechoslovak Government. I said that I hoped that that did not mean that Czechoslovak Government had to grant all Sudeten demands. Count Ciano made an evasive reply saying again that the whole responsibility was in the hands of Czechs. As if to qualify what he had said Count Ciano returned to the subject and said that he did not consider that the position was as yet 'desperate'.

Repeated to Prague and Berlin.

No. 664

*Sir N. Charles (Rome) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 23, 9.30 a.m.)  
No. 553 Telegraphic [C 8627/1941/18]

ROME, August 22, 1938, 2.5 p.m.

My telegram No. 552.<sup>1</sup>

Military Attaché reports from observations made by himself and colleagues that Italian Government give no indication of keeping army in any special state of preparedness during the next two months.

As far as the Air Force is concerned the Air Attaché states that the recent visits paid to the three main aerodromes, engine factories and other aircraft firms show no unusual activity. On the contrary output appears to be diminishing generally and factories are closing down for periods of eight to fourteen days for the summer leave.

<sup>1</sup> No. 663.

No. 665

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
[C 11048/1941/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, August 22, 1938

Dear Secretary of State,

I hope you don't think it over-insistent or over-presumptuous on my part when I telegraph and write to you so much about Lord Runciman and what he should do. But the stakes for which we are playing are too high to allow me to remain silent on a matter on which I feel so strongly. Besides it is my bounden duty to set before you the German case and their way of thinking and their machinations as I see them.

I feel so strongly also on the big British issue. Have we or have we not got to fight Germany again? The followers of the Crowe tradition in your Department argue and have long argued that it is inevitable. I regard that attitude as nothing short of disastrous. It may prove to be inevitable, but it seems to me a suicidal policy fatalistically to accept it as so. If we fight

Germany this year or next over the Sudeten question, we shall probably beat her but it will mean that we shall have to go on fighting her again and again, until one day we may be ourselves beaten. It is the history of the United States of America over again. If it had not been for the Prince Consort, Palmerston and Russell would have plunged us into war with them over the Mason and Slidell case and the U.S.A. would never have forgotten or forgiven us. The cause was not a good enough one and thank goodness it is now unlikely that we shall ever fight the U.S.A. again.

It may well, in spite of all the croakers, be the same with Germany if we can avoid fighting them about such a bad case as the Sudeten. However badly Germany behaves, it does not make the rights of the Sudeten any less justifiable. We are on the worst of wickets and to go into battle, without having our Empire behind us—and we surely won't have it wholeheartedly on such an issue—seems to me inconceivable. I think, in spite of the humiliation, that I would rather almost anything than that.

Never again are those blocks of Germans on Germany's frontier going to be misgoverned by Czechs as they have been during the past twenty years. That seems to me also inconceivable and we have no earthly or heavenly right to force them to be so. The Teuton and the Slav are irreconcilable—just as are the Briton and the Slav. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Moreover however badly the Germans behave, one must also condemn Benes and his military enthusiasts. Their position is quite untenable and as such one has immense sympathy for them. But I cease to have it when they try to behave like Samson and bring down the walls of the Temple to soften the bitterness of their own humiliation. Masaryk would have been great enough to appreciate the hard facts and make the best of them, but Benes is a small man. That is a fact. And now all depends on Lord Runciman.

What is Hitler going to do? When all, as in this country, depends on the decision of a single individual, one must be guided, under Providence, by one's own instinct and impressions.

The German army has been told to be as ready for battle (100 per cent.) as it ever can be this year as from the middle of September onwards: i.e. prepared for all eventualities. The Germans are not philanthropists and in similar circumstances I expect we would have acted in the same way if we had as little faith as the Germans have in Benes' honesty or even ability in the face of his opposition to do the right thing, and if we were convinced, as the Germans are, that the Czech General Staff wants a showdown now rather than later.

It is for that reason that I believed that it was useless to appeal to Hitler for a modification of his military arrangements. It is one of my duties to put myself under the German skin, if I can, and to report to you how they feel. Their whole experience of Benes is that he cannot be trusted and that whatever he may say, he always gets out of it. And they believe that the Czech military want war now when they believe that they can drag France and ourselves in rather than later, when the international position may be less

<sup>1</sup> A reference to a statement made to Sir N. Henderson is here omitted.

favourable for them. That being the case if I were a German I would also be prepared for all eventualities, seeing that the Czech military are determined that no concessions shall be made to the Sudeten.

It stands to reason that Hitler himself must equally be prepared for all eventualities. But from there to say that he has already decided on aggressive action against Czechoslovakia this autumn is, I think, untrue. He still hopes to get what he wants by peaceable means and what he wants now is a Swiss cantonal system for the Sudeten to enable them to live their own life and not to be harried all the time by minor Czech officials. That the plums thereafter will drop ripe from the tree into the German Reich is another question. Every German, however moderate, believes this to be inevitable in the long run and since in politics geography always has the last word, it is more than likely. But for the moment a quiet life for the Sudeten would, I believe, satisfy Hitler; but if Benes won't give enough, then he may lose all. It is Abyssinia over again with far less moral right on our side.

If Runciman's hand is being forced, so is Hitler's. He avoided a speech at Breslau where he was expected to speak by the thirty to forty thousand Sudeten who attended that festival. He cannot avoid referring to them in his speeches at Nuremberg, which comes just too early to give Runciman all the time he needs to make up his mind.

Consequently if Runciman has not spoken before Nuremberg, Hitler will have to do so. That is the point of my telegram No. 388<sup>2</sup> which I sent you yesterday and which was in fact based on your letter to Lord Runciman of August 12 [*sic*]<sup>3</sup>. It is, I fear, useless our saying to Hitler be patient, though I say it and will go on saying it to every German I see. The German retort is that we would not have been so patient ourselves during these past four months if the Sudeten Germans had been Ulstermen and Benes de Valera. Nor for internal reasons can Hitler be silent. What I anticipate him saying is something on the following lines: 'We have trusted the English for four months although we always knew that Benes would never yield except to force. The English won't put the screw on, so we are obliged to do so. We mean business. It is this, that or the other for the Sudeten or nothing. If that is not Lord Runciman's opinion then I shall insist on a plebiscite and the full right of self-determination.' He may even add that for the sake of world peace he is willing to hold his hand for a while yet but the end will be the same: that he will choose his own moment and that he gives us and the French full warning of that. And he may threaten the Czechs with worse in the future if they cannot see sense now.

Roughly that is the sort of minimum line I see Hitler's mind moving along. I cannot believe that he will do more if we tell him that we shall *certainly* fight him if he does more. But what do we gain? Mere postponement and a rising market. That is the policy we have been following for years, with our eyes tight closed to realities, to evolution and those geographical facts which always have the last word whatever we little humans do or say.

That is not defeatism. Defeatism to my mind is saying that we must fight

<sup>2</sup> No. 662.

<sup>3</sup> Apparently in error for August 18 (No. 643).

Germany again, when there is still a chance and a big one that we need never do so. It is repugnant to me to run bad horses and back losing ones all the time. I would fight Germany tomorrow for a good cause but I refuse to contemplate our doing so for the Sudeten. If they were Hungarians or Poles or Roumanians or the citizens of any small nation, all England would be on their side. They are Germans, so we shut our eyes to realities and are influenced by other considerations, some honourable, some chivalrous but many egoistical or inspired by fear.

Yours in great haste,  
NEVILLE HENDERSON

No. 666

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
[C 11048/1941/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, August 22, 1938

My dear Secretary of State,

I have just found an opportunity to send you a line by a chance Messenger and have hurriedly written you, I fear, at some length. I hate troubling you with what I write and at the same time I daren't miss any opportunity of trying to explain the position as I see it at this end of the dilemma.

I am afraid that Hitler does not intend to answer the memorandum about military preparations. As he was to be in Berlin yesterday, I put off a literally flying visit to Frankfurt on the chance of hearing from him. Incidentally it would have been the first Sunday away from Berlin for me this year! Now he has the Horthy visit so I have abandoned hope, though the memorandum still leaves it open to ask me to speak to him, if he wants to do so later. But for reasons which I have explained in my typed letter<sup>1</sup> to you I do not see what he can say. It is German policy to have their army 100 per cent. ready by the middle of September. They have no faith in Benes and the Czech military and from their point of view they are probably justified. But their army's readiness does not necessarily mean war, though it is their trump card. I am sure that Hitler has not decided how to act. All depends on Lord Runciman. But Hitler's hand is forced just as much as Runciman's by Nuremberg. That is the position. We must not expect the impossible and for internal reasons Hitler is compelled to come out into the open at Nuremberg, the one place and occasion in the year where he speaks to the whole nation.

Consequently, if we do not wish to lose the initiative, willy nilly Lord Runciman must come out with his epoch-making conception of a just settlement, before Hitler's queers his pitch.

It is really no good taking up any officially menacing attitude towards the Germans until that conception is made known publicly. It is certainly no good repeating a May 21st warning before then. Once that conception is published, then, and then only, must H.M. Govt. make up their mind whether they will say to Germany 'we shall go to war if you refuse to give

<sup>1</sup> No. 665.

this solution a chance'. All veiled menaces before that moment are irritating and futile.

I have suggested a calculated indiscretion on Lord R.'s part as better than nothing but something, something is the whole burden of my anxiety.

Whatever the exaggeration about incidents the fact remains: if H.M. Govt. want a peaceable solution, it can only be on lines which ensure that the Sudeten govern themselves and are not subjected to Czech rule or misrule, through their minor officials. It means Sudeten policemen in the Sudeten lands and a heap of other things. I wonder sometimes whether we are backing Henlein enough in London. Unless we do we shall lose him and he is the last hope of moderation. We have always announced our intention to impose a 'comprehensive scheme' on the Czechs and it was on that basis alone that we induced Hitler to accept our intervention. We cannot go back on that and we must equally realise that the Sudeten and Czechs will never mix and so have got to be separated as much as possible.

In haste and many apologies,

Yours ever,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

No. 667

*Mr. Shone (Bled) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 24, 9.30 a.m.)*

*No. 7 Telegraphic [C 8667/1941/18]*

BLD, August 23, 1938, 4.40 p.m.

French Minister told me in confidence yesterday that Czechoslovak Minister for Foreign Affairs had informed him that German Ministers at Belgrade and Bucharest had made oral communications to Yugoslav and Roumanian Governments some three days ago in the following sense:

(1) German Government would take 'all necessary measures' if Czechoslovak Government failed to meet demands of Sudeten Germans 'on all points';

(2) If in that event French Government were to intervene militarily in support of Czechoslovak Government German Government would regard such action as aggression. Dr. Krofta thought it likely that similar notification had been made in other capitals.

French Minister said he was telegraphing this information to Paris and suggested I should inform you. He expressed concern at the prospect of Governments concerned accepting such a communication. As he added he intended to speak to Yugoslav President of the Council and Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs last night I said I would wait to telegraph until this morning to which he agreed.

Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs confirmed that communication in above terms had been made to him just before his departure for . . .<sup>1</sup> Yugoslav President of the Council on the other hand assured the French

<sup>1</sup> The text here is uncertain.

Minister that German Minister here had only made the first part of communication and had not mentioned the word 'France'. French Minister who believes this to be the case thought German Minister here may have found it too embarrassing to make the rest of the communication. When I asked him as to M. Stoyadinovitch's reaction he said President of the Council had observed that the German Government seemed to be adopting 'a new tone'.

Above communication must, I think, have been made to M. Stoyadinovitch after my interview with him reported in my telegram No. 5.<sup>2</sup>

Please repeat to Paris and Berlin if necessary.

Repeated to Prague and Bucharest.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed.

### No. 668

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 233 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 8587/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, August 23, 1938, 7.15 p.m.

Berlin telegram No. 388<sup>1</sup> to me.

Please show Lord Runciman Berlin telegrams Nos. 400<sup>2</sup> Saving, 372,<sup>3</sup> 378,<sup>4</sup> and 388<sup>5</sup> and report by telegraph his views on Sir N. Henderson's recommendation that he should make some public pronouncement before the Nazi Party meeting at Nuremberg on September 5 suggesting the bases on which a settlement of the Sudeten question must be reached.

It would be convenient if Mr. Gwatkin when he comes to London tomorrow were in possession of Lord Runciman's views on this subject and also on the points raised by the Secretary of State in his letter to Lord Runciman of the 18th instant.<sup>6</sup>

Repeated to Berlin No. 87 Saving and Paris No. 217 Saving.

<sup>1</sup> No. 662.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. This telegram gave German press accounts of a statement said to have been made by Herr Kundt on August 17. See also No. 642.

<sup>3</sup> No. 640.

<sup>4</sup> No. 649.

<sup>5</sup> No. 662.

<sup>6</sup> No. 643.

### No. 669

*Mr. Torr (The Vatican) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 24, 9.30 a.m.)*

*No. 20 Telegraphic [C 8634/1941/18]*

ROME, August 23, 1938, 8.40 p.m.

My telegram No. 19.<sup>1</sup>

I saw Cardinal Secretary of State today and found him a little less pessimistic than I had feared though only concrete observation I got out of him was that he thought Italian Government had their hands full enough not to want any new adventures and he believed they had some time ago told

<sup>1</sup> Not printed.

Berlin that if the latter insisted on forcing issue in Czechoslovakia they should not count on Italy being able to back them up in the event of trouble.

His Eminence also said that in spite of the way the Church had been treated by the Nazis he thought most of the Sudetens wanted to be incorporated in Germany.

No. 670

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Shone (Bled)*

*No. 3 Telegraphic [C 8635/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, August 23, 1938, 10.0 p.m.

1. The French Chargé d'Affaires informed Sir O. Sargent on August 23 that, according to the Czechoslovak Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Yugoslav Prime Minister and the Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs had received a verbal communication from the German Government on August 20 stating that the German Government would be obliged to intervene if the Sudeten question was not rapidly settled in a way giving complete satisfaction to the German minority. If France as a result of this intervention decided to take military action against the Reich, the German Government considered that this should be regarded as an act of aggression against them.

2. M. Cambon added that your French colleague was seeing MM. Comnène and Stoyadinovitch on August 22 and 23 to discover whether this information was correct.

3. Please telegraph your observations on the above report.  
Repeated to Prague, Berlin, Bucharest and Paris.

No. 671

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 24)*

*No. 409 Saving: Telegraphic [C 8692/65/18]*

BERLIN, August 23, 1938

French Military Attaché informed my Military Attaché today that he had made official enquiries at request of French General Staff at German Ministry of War this morning regarding retention of men with colours in Germany after normal date for release. German War Office had officially denied any intention of retaining men as above and said that procedure this year would be practically normal. Second year men would be released early October and recruits would not join up until November 3.

This information contradicts that given my Military Attaché a fortnight ago and all previous information received from various sources by French Military Attaché.

Both Military Attachés feel that although it (? is possible)<sup>1</sup> that German Military authorities have quite recently changed their intention, it is more

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.



probable that information given today was misleading. The Germans may argue that they are only keeping on men who have lost a month's training on harvest leave, and that they are therefore not technically keeping them for more than two years with the colours.

No. 672

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
[C 11048/1941/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, August 23, 1938

Dear Secretary of State,

Ribbentrop has sent me a copy of his personal letter to you of August 21.<sup>1</sup> Its tenour is typically Ribbentrop and its standpoint equally irritating, but I cannot say that I would have expected anything else from him. These people do not play the game according to the rules and we must realise that sad fact. As Kirkpatrick once said to me of Hitler, 'How can one play chess with a man who insists on moving his knight like a bishop?'

My only comment on the letter would be, 'On what terms *would* Germany co-operate with us in a settlement of the Sudeten problem?' That is a question which we may later have to put to them, though I do not recommend continuing the correspondence. One might make some debating points but they would serve no real purpose.

My impression is that Hitler is being not only egged on but deliberately misled by the extremist faction here. For a controlled press the difference between the tone of the more moderate newspapers and that of the more extreme ones on the subject of the Czechs is very striking and is quite a new departure. The 'Völkischer Beobachter', the chief Nazi Party organ, for example, exaggerates every incident so as to increase Hitler's resentment. Some of these incidents are not even mentioned by the 'Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung', 'Frankfurter Zeitung', etc. The distinction nowadays between the two currents of opinion here is very marked. It gives rise to floods of rumours. But one must beware of the stories which are merely fathered by individual wishes.

The point to my mind is, however, not whether these incidents are exaggerated or not (except in so far as that influences Hitler) but that they occur at all and so constantly. The Sudeten and the Czechs will never run smoothly in harness together—that is a fact.

No other Government in the world but the British (more power to it) could ever have launched such a boat as Runciman's in mid-ocean without any definite sailing orders when so much depends on his individual conception of what a just settlement should be. Whatever one may eventually say about his independence, the British public in general will accept his verdict as just and the world in general will hold His Majesty's Government responsible for it. That is inescapable and terrifying. Terrifying because so much

<sup>1</sup> No. 661.

depends not only for the Sudeten and the Czechs but for England on that conception of his. If I never say it again, I must say once more that Germany will never, either now or in the future, accept a solution which falls short of absolute autonomy on Swiss cantonal lines. They may not, if we threaten them, make a less comprehensive plan an immediate war issue, but a non-agreed solution amounts to war sooner or later and at Germany's own time. Three months ago Germany might have accepted somewhat less, but there have been too many evasions on the part of Benes and too many incidents in between, exaggerated or not, to let Hitler agree or for him to allow the Sudeten to agree to anything less. I feel this is absolutely definite, so that if Lord Runciman comes out with less and His Majesty's Government regard his proposals as fair and equitable, then *we must make up our minds to fight*. Germany will today listen to nothing except force.

Personally I pray that Lord Runciman will regard cantonal autonomy as the only possible solution. It is anyway better than a plebiscite which is the only middle course between the failure to get an agreed solution and war. Things have gone too far for any tinkering about with percentages or complicated compromises. It must be a comprehensive scheme or nothing and the only compromise is between full autonomy and a plebiscite.

Another thing I pray for is that Lord Runciman will announce before the end of the month what he considers the only right *basis* on which to negotiate. If he has not done so, then Hitler will inevitably proclaim to the world at Nuremberg what constitutes the only basis that he will accept. It is what Benes should have done in May. If he had then accepted the basis of a genuine State of nationalities, he would have saved Europe much anxiety and Czechoslovakia much subsequent humiliation. To my mind it is tragic that all this time has passed without finding a basis for negotiation. Surely one must begin with that. It has taken from May 7 till August 21 for the 'Prager Presse' (vide Newton's telegram No. 623<sup>2</sup>) to come out with a statement that the solution on the Czech side must be 'radical and sincere'. What a commentary!

Anyway the British Parliament will be fortunate if it does not have to be summoned before the end of September, since I must repeat that, in my opinion, one thing is certain, that there can be no agreed solution on any other basis than complete autonomy. If, consequently, Lord Runciman says anything less, then we must start getting ready. No appeal to Hitler will be of any avail. He may *not act* in the face of a categoric threat of force, but he will *not accept* a lesser solution and the issue will thus remain unsettled indefinitely, i.e. until his army gives the word.

That is the picture as I see it and as I feel obliged to set it forth to you. It may be that His Majesty's Government will decide that this is the moment or never to teach Germany a lesson. History may say it was, if we don't take it. I do not share that view, but that is merely a personal opinion.

I hate flooding you with all this correspondence. If I do so, it is only in the hope that something in it all may possibly be of some help to you in the

<sup>2</sup> Not printed.

midst of your vast responsibilities. Meanwhile the Horthy visit lasts till the end of the month. We have that much breathing space but no more. Then there is the Stuttgart 'Ausland' Congress<sup>3</sup> during the last days of August. That will be the curtain raiser for Nuremberg. There are bound to be many Sudeten Germans present and what is said thereat may be a pointer for Hitler at Nuremberg.

The Horthy visit is interesting and may have a considerable influence on events. The Germans are trying to make out that since Hungary was once part of the Austrian Empire, now that Austria has become Germany, Hungary is still the natural partner of Germany as Austria's heir. Unfortunately Hungary is the natural ally of Germany—at least until such time as Hungary, thanks to Germany, shall have recovered her irredenta. No one but Germany is going to help her to do that, unless Lord R. does.

I wish I knew how France proposes to help Czechoslovakia if the latter is attacked. General Viullemin[sic] went away impressed with the superiority of the German air force over the French and I understand that the German anti-air defences in the Rhineland are exceedingly efficient. Any attempt to invade Germany by land would be disastrously costly and the Germans certainly won't attack the Maginot line. So far as I can see therefore, France could do nothing unless we come in and blockade Germany—and in the meantime the Sudeten and Czechs would be heroically butchered. Once in Prague Hitler would possibly propose peace on the basis of the annexation of the Sudeten areas!!

Yours ever,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

I think Hitler's attitude at Nuremberg will be as follows: Benes will not listen to persuasion: the British won't put the screw on: so I must. N. H.

<sup>3</sup> i.e. of Germans abroad.

## No. 673

*Letter from Viscount Chilston (Moscow) to Mr. Collier<sup>1</sup>*

[C 8919/1941/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, MOSCOW, August 23, 1938

My dear Collier,

Maclean<sup>2</sup> had a not uninteresting conversation yesterday with the German Ambassador's Private Secretary, with whom he is on quite intimate terms and who had asked specially if he might come and have a talk with him.

Our German colleague began by saying that his Ambassador, who has just returned from leave, had been to see Litvinov and had told him that Germany would only invade Czechoslovakia in the event of an act of provocation on the part of the Czechs. To this Litvinov had replied that an act of provocation on the part of the Czechs was unthinkable and that the Germans would certainly be the aggressors in any conflict which might arise.

<sup>1</sup> Head of the Northern Department in the Foreign Office.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. F. Maclean, Third Secretary at H.M. Embassy in Moscow.

If Germany were to invade Czechoslovakia, the French would undoubtedly mobilize and Great Britain, however much Mr. Chamberlain might dislike it, would be obliged to come to their assistance. The Soviet Union 'would do its best to help Czechoslovakia'. The Ambassador had duly telegraphed Litvinov's remarks to Berlin.

The German secretary went on to say that Dirksen [*sic*], in his reports from London, had given it as his considered view that Great Britain would certainly go to war, if Czechoslovakia were invaded and France went to her assistance. He had also expressed the view that, if his Government wanted an understanding with Great Britain, now was the moment, as they could never hope to find a British Government better disposed towards Germany than that now in power and if nothing was done relations between the two countries could only deteriorate. Unfortunately however little attention was paid in Berlin to Dirksen's [*sic*] reports, or, for that matter, to those from other missions abroad. To the Führer it was quite incredible that the British should fail to understand that, in invading Czechoslovakia, Germany, in whatever circumstances the invasion took place, would simply be rescuing three and a half million Germans, who were hers by right. Whatever his Ambassadors reported, he simply could not believe that, when, as it seemed to him, it was so clear that Germany was in the right, Great Britain would be prepared to go to war on behalf of Czechoslovakia. Ribbentrop shared, or affected to share, the Führer's optimism and the certainty that Great Britain would in no circumstances move and that Germany would be able to invade Czechoslovakia with impunity was reflected with alarming clearness in the despatches and instructions which went out from the Wilhelmstrasse. This, our informant said, was very disturbing to professional diplomats like his Ambassador, who saw their country about to involve herself in a war in which the odds would in their opinion be heavily against her. The recent panic on the Berlin bourse was entirely due to fear of war in well-informed circles. The blame, they felt, would lie to a certain extent with His Majesty's Government who, as in 1914, had failed to make their position sufficiently clear. The only hope in their opinion would be for a representative of His Majesty's Government to inform the Führer himself quite categorically that in certain circumstances Great Britain would quite certainly go to war in defence of Czechoslovakia. This might well have the necessary deterrent effect.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> In a second letter of August 23 to Mr. Collier Lord Chilton wrote that he had obtained further details of this conversation: 'It appears that after Litvinov had told the Ambassador that, in the event of a German invasion of Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union "would do its best to help Czechoslovakia", he went on to say that, if Germany were only democratic, the Soviet attitude towards the Czechoslovak question would be completely different, as the Soviet Union "had always been in favour of national self-determination". Our informant told us that the Embassy had not yet telegraphed this remark of Litvinov's to Berlin, as they felt that it would only enrage the Führer. They themselves took it as a clear indication that the Soviet Government were by no means opposed to the idea of a Soviet-German *rapprochement*. Any such *rapprochement* was, however, unfortunately quite out of the question owing to Herr Hitler's passionate and unreasoning hatred of what he imagined to be Bolshevism.'

I may add that Cholerton of the 'Daily Telegraph' was recently spoken to in the same sense by the 'D.N.B.' correspondent here, who is practically attached to the German Embassy and has access to the confidential despatches. Cholerton says that he seemed very much depressed by the insane optimism prevailing in official circles in Berlin with regard to the Czech problem.

I am sending copies of this letter to Henderson, Phipps and Newton.

Yours ever,  
CHILSTON

No. 674

*Letter from Viscount Runciman (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*

[C 8725/1941/18]

LORD RUNCIMAN'S MISSION, PRAGUE, *August 23, 1938*

The bag is going off this morning and what I write now will probably be out of date, for developments of the past 48 hours appear to have drawn the two chief parties here much closer together. On the very day of our lunch and palaver at Max Hohenlohe's<sup>1</sup> the Sudetens were given privately a brief note of points which can be granted by the Czechs. Who was the author of the points was not quite clear and as they had found their way to the S.D.P. through a non-political channel it has not been sufficiently illuminated. Yesterday we 'lost' Gwatkin for a day during which he was able to have a long talk with Henlein.<sup>2</sup> I had got a better atmosphere and the S.D.P. men were forthcoming. Gwatkin followed this up successfully, but he was after the interviews still uncertain about the origin of these points. On that I have asked him to dictate as fully as his memory permits a record of his long conversations. There are some individuals who wish to fade out of the picture now. Anyhow I see a crack in the clouds and if only Benes does the large thing we may be able to embark on negotiations at once. Then the thing to be feared is a rupture between him and his Prime Minister. Let us hope that we may be spared this complication. I am in daily touch with them, and Benes is to see me on these delicate relationships at 11 and the Prime Minister dines with me and my wife tonight. This is a typical day.

Benes can see this business through if he follows up what has already been done. If however he won't take a hand in it we shall *not* succeed.

When I have more time I shall write to you more fully on dates and speeches in Nuremburgh [*sic*]. If only these Benes balloons drift the right way and in addition we see negotiations proceeding the future for European peace may be comparatively hopeful. If we are not disappointed I may send you a brief enigmatic telegram in code.

Yours ever,  
W. R.

<sup>1</sup> i.e. on August 18. See Appendix II.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix II.

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 27)**No. 298 [C 8820/1941/18]*BRITISH LEGATION, PRAGUE, *August 23, 1938*

My Lord,

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a record of a conversation between the Military Attaché and his German colleague, which turned chiefly on the situation in this country.

2. I would draw particular attention to Colonel Toussaint's view that the Sudeten Germans might decide to appeal to Great Britain, France, Italy and Germany on the principle of self-determination. This may be some further indication that the German Government are toying with the idea of a four-Power Conference on the question of Czechoslovakia, should Lord Runciman's Mission fail to find a solution.

3. It will be recalled that the idea of a four-Power Conference was originally one of the possibilities discussed by Mr. Strang, on the occasion of his visit to Prague last May. At that time it was considered that the German Government would not be inclined to accept such a solution of the problem. It is perhaps significant that since then the indications of a changed attitude on the part of the German Government have come from several sources. A hint in this direction was made by Herr von Dirksen, as reported in the third paragraph of Berlin despatch No. 829<sup>1</sup> of the 5th August, and Herr von Ribbentrop also alluded to the possibility in conversation with Lord Allen of Hurtwood (see my telegram No. 438<sup>2</sup> of August 13). The idea of a four-Power Conference as the ultimate way out of the present impasse was also recently discussed by the Sudeten German leaders with Reuter's correspondent (see Mr. Troutbeck's letter<sup>3</sup> to Mr. Mallet of August 23) and the Italian Military Attaché, in conversation with Colonel Stronge on August 22, also stated that he regarded such a conference as the only possible chance of avoiding war (see enclosure to my despatch No. 299<sup>4</sup> of August 23). Finally, the Italian Chargé d'Affaires recently threw a fly over the First Secretary as to whether His Majesty's Government were considering the idea.

4. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Representatives in Berlin, Paris and Rome.

I have, &amp;c.,

B. C. NEWTON

<sup>1</sup> Not printed.<sup>2</sup> No. 615.<sup>3</sup> Not printed.<sup>4</sup> No. 676.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 675

PRAGUE, *August 17, 1938*

H.M. Minister, Prague.

This morning I had a long conversation with my German colleague,

Colonel Toussaint, whom I had not seen since my return from leave. It was an ordinary routine visit and I did not intend to refer to the present political and military situation unless Colonel Toussaint himself showed a desire to do so and took the initiative. We spoke at first of our respective holidays and when he said that since his return he had had a great deal of worry I was able to make a sympathetic reference to his tired appearance. This had the desired effect and he thereupon poured forth those thoughts which were most obviously weighing on his mind.

He started off by saying that his work had become of late so exacting and responsible that he had been compelled to ask to be relieved of his second post (M.A. Bucharest). He regretted this in some ways as affairs in Roumania were of considerable interest to the Reich at the moment, especially from the military point of view. He thought that having Soviet Russia as a neighbour was a perpetual source of embarrassment to that country and that the most she was willing to concede to the Soviets in the event of war was permission for the passage of aircraft to Czechoslovakia provided the latter were not armed and were flown by Czech pilots. She was so far relentless on the subject of the passage of troops.

I asked him how he thought Poland felt on the subject of having Russia as a neighbour and he replied that that country stood firm in her anti-Soviet policy and that this attitude was fully endorsed by the Army. Of the latter he said that it had made remarkable progress in recent years and was fairly well trained. The Corps of Officers was particularly good.

Colonel Toussaint then made a passing reference to Yugoslavia—I had mentioned earlier that I had recently been in Bled—and said that he thought M. Stoyadinovitch was quite firmly in the saddle there, a fact which he welcomed as the policy he was pursuing was both rational and wise.

Turning to matters nearer home he said that he had always hoped for a possible peaceful solution of the Sudeten question and that his Minister had done his utmost towards that end. At present, however, it was hard to see a ray of light because the two standpoints were so utterly at variance. He felt sure that Lord Runciman, with his able and impartial mind, would soon be forced to the conclusion that no compromise or temporary expedient was possible. If the matter had been properly handled a few years ago some form of state similar to Switzerland might have met the demands of the Sudeten Germans but now that was too late as the conditions no longer applied. The Sudetens had become National Socialists in the hopelessness of their plight as indeed Germany herself had done under oppression some years ago. At this point I asked Colonel Toussaint if 'autonomy' as demanded by Herr Henlein would, in his opinion, satisfy the party and he replied that he could not candidly say yes. Nothing short of an 'Anschluss' was possible today. If that were the case, I asked, was I to infer that war was the only solution he had in view and he replied 'No, at all events not a European war' and to my further query as to how he could envisage a peaceful solution he said that the Sudeten Germans might decide to appeal to the conscience of Europe on the principle of self-determination, upon which the Versailles Treaty and

democracy were founded. I asked him what he meant by 'Europe' and he replied Great Britain, France, Italy and Germany. He felt sure that there could be only one answer to this appeal. The difficulties of frontier delimitation, he added, were apt to be greatly exaggerated as the Sudeten area, though irregular, was clearly defined on the whole ethnographically and there were only occasional 'pockets' of Czechs apart from the officials. Moreover European frontiers were constantly changed, those of France and Germany in particular having done so on various occasions.

I then asked Colonel Toussaint how he thought events would proceed even supposing he was right in his supposition regarding European public opinion. Did he think the Czechs would submit to a ruling of the Powers? He admitted there was no chance of this and that war, local war, was in the last resort inevitable.

From this point onwards the conversation became rather more general in character, ranging over a number of subjects connected with the situation. In regard to the Czech attitude he said that the Government had now reached a stage, hopelessly inadequate though it was, beyond which they were not prepared to go. The recent Officers' Manifesto made that clear. This was, he knew from private sources, connived at by the Government. If it had been a warning to the Government it could easily have been done quietly by General Krejci. It represented the will of the people and the Army and the whole country had now made up its mind that war was inevitable and that nothing could be gained by making further concessions.

In regard to France's intervention in the event of an attack on Czechoslovakia Colonel Toussaint said that he knew for a fact that not only in General Staff circles in Berlin but also in the Fuehrer's immediate entourage the view was held that French public opinion would never stand for intervention for a cause which was absolutely contrary to the democratic principle of self-determination and was designed to bolster up a sort of petty Czech imperialism. Even if France did intervene she could not achieve very much as Germany had no intention of attacking her and she was not in a position to invade Germany and penetrate the defences.

Two more points were brought out by Colonel Toussaint which are not without interest. The first concerns the crisis in May. He was sent for from Berlin immediately after it had occurred and he assured me on his word of honour that not a movement had taken place in Germany which could give rise to any fear. Everything had been entirely normal. Secondly he said that he had started as a partisan of the 'Czech front' in his early days in the Intelligence Branch at the German Kriegsministerium. He had had a friendly interview with President Masaryk in 1929 when travelling in this country and he had consistently done his best to keep on good terms with Czech officers and to foster good relations. During his last two years however, as Military Attaché, he had become disgusted and disillusioned.

In conclusion Colonel Toussaint became somewhat impassioned in his manner. He said that Germans in common with other peoples desired only to live in peace but they seemed destined to have to fight for the mere



'Lebensraum' which was necessary in order to enable them to feed their people and to live in decency. He made reference to the relative positions of Britain, France and Germany in this respect. Presumably Colonel Toussaint had Germany's wider programme in view.

Throughout our conversation my own interjections were mostly confined to the putting of questions though I did have an occasion in which to express a purely personal view that public opinion in democratic countries was a very uncertain factor and that it might easily be swayed against any country who resorted to war before every possible peaceful solution had been explored. He knew as well as I did that once war was let loose no one could foretell as to who might ultimately be fighting who. Colonel Toussaint agreed.

H. C. T. STRONGE

*Lieutenant-Colonel, Military Attaché.*

No. 676

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*

*No. 299 [C 8821/1941/18]*

BRITISH LEGATION, PRAGUE, August 23, 1938

His Majesty's Minister at Prague presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit to him the under-mentioned report from the Military Attaché.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 676

PRAGUE, August 22, 1938

H.M. Minister, Prague.

This morning I had a talk with my Italian colleague, Colonel Count Valfre di Bonzo. You may perhaps recall that the last time I saw him, other than socially, he made a definite forecast that the Sudeten problem would be resolved by war, a small war, at latest by April, 1939. That was in June. Today Colonel di Bonzo is even more emphatic about the method of resolution but has shortened the time limit to the late autumn of this year. I report these 'prophecies' for what they are worth though I have reason to believe that Italian Military Attachés are generally well informed regarding the information at the disposal of 'inner circles' in Rome. I will not report the whole course of our conversation but will content myself with a résumé of the main points Colonel di Bonzo made in so far as they concern the present situation.

In the first place he could not see any possible way of finding a compromise in view of the determined attitude on both sides. He described all the Czech concessions as 'bêtises' and quite beside the real point, namely autonomy. Because of this unbridgeable gap he greatly feared that all mediation would in the end prove fruitless.

Secondly, Colonel di Bonzo stated quite definitely that the General Staff were now really in command in Czechoslovakia and that their position had strengthened steadily since the crisis in May. M. Machnik was now Minister

for National Defence in name only, but he was not sure whether General Syrový or General Krejčí really held the reins behind the scenes. He inclined to think it was the latter as General Syrový lacked the drive and intelligence required. In connection with this I would add that if this contention is true—and I personally think it is exaggerated, being confined to influence rather than control—General Krejčí would certainly seem to be the more powerful of the two men, though General Syrový would be a good figurehead for the Army to follow if it came to taking direct political action.

Thirdly, he said that the desire for war on the part of large numbers of Czechs of all classes, suicidal though it seemed, was definitely gaining ground and he believed that some in high places—he was possibly referring to the Cabinet—were also swayed that way. It was a form of desperate heroism.

Fourthly, he was personally convinced that the only assistance the Czechs would receive when war broke out would be some Soviet aircraft. He could not understand how his colleague in Paris continued to report that France would or could march. Nobody in Italy, and as far as he knew in Germany also, really believed that. The Czechs, on the other hand, seemed convinced that they would receive French and possibly British aid. The only possible chance of avoiding war, and it was a slender one because of the Czechs' refusal to bow to any real pressure from whatever quarter it should come, lay in the summoning of a conference of the Powers to decide upon the rights and wrongs of the case. If Germany were asked to guarantee the integrity of the Czechoslovak state, minus the Sudeten areas, she would do so unhesitatingly and would honour her word. Local autonomy could then be given to the Hungarians. The Fuehrer's guarantee to Italy<sup>1</sup> to respect the Brenner frontier for all time was, he mentioned incidentally, implicitly trusted by the Italian Government.

In conclusion Colonel di Bonzo outlined what he thought might happen in the not far distant future. After Lord Runciman had been compelled to admit a stalemate, the reaction in the Sudeten areas might easily provoke trouble and if this resulted in the deaths of some Sudetens war would follow at once. Apart from other considerations Herr Hitler's prestige prevented him from standing by much longer and accepting an indefinite solution. The Czech General Staff had prepared the Army and the country for war in an almost masterly fashion. It was now a force very much to be reckoned with but singlehanded it could not hold out for more than two, or at the very most three, months. Every civilian man and woman was ready to fight somehow and the massacres in the Sudeten area would be appalling. Retaliation would probably take the form of the destruction of Prague from the air.

Whilst making due allowance for exaggeration with a view to creating a big impression upon me, I am of the opinion that in the main Colonel di Bonzo painted a picture which he himself believed to be true.

H. C. T. STRONGE

*Lieutenant-Colonel, Military Attaché.*

<sup>1</sup> Herr Hitler had given this pledge in a speech in Rome on May 7.

No. 677

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 24, 4.50 p.m.)*  
*No. 462 Telegraphic [C 8670/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 24, 1938, 2.13 p.m.

Your telegram No. 233.<sup>1</sup>

I have been giving considerable thought to Sir N. Henderson's recent telegrams ending with his telegram No. 388<sup>2</sup> in which he emphasizes importance of Lord Runciman coming out with some definite pronouncement of principle before opening of Nuremberg rally. I need hardly say that I fully appreciate importance of giving Herr Hitler every opportunity of treating Sudeten German question with moderation on that occasion should he be so disposed. This seems the more important in view of various indications recorded in my despatch No. 298<sup>3</sup> that German Government are turning over in their mind advisability of a four Power conference, an idea which is hardly compatible with an immediate solution by force.

On the other hand it seems to me unreasonable that Lord Runciman should be expected to come out with a definite pronouncement of principle by any given date. He has steadily and rightly refused the rôle of judge or arbitrator. His work is to mediate and to facilitate direct dealings between the parties. This he has effectively done and has secured the confidence of both sides. It may be that before Nuremberg rally opens it will be possible to announce that negotiations between Czechoslovak Government and Henlein Party have, thanks largely to Lord Runciman's presence and advice, taken a more hopeful turn. It is still too early to make any definite forecast as to that. But in contrary event I would suggest that some statement explaining need for a full examination of the issues and emphasizing that Lord Runciman is actively engaged in promoting solution fair to both sides should be sufficient provided Herr Hitler does desire a peaceful solution to enable him to hold his hand. Sir N. Henderson could perhaps suggest when such a statement should be made and he might meanwhile prepare the ground by providing German Government with any further more detailed information which can be supplied in confidence as to procedure and progress of the mission. Reports for this purpose could be furnished from time to time.

I have discussed the foregoing with Lord Runciman who concurs. Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin is due back in London to-night and will be able to discuss the matter in greater detail.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 668.

<sup>2</sup> No. 662.

<sup>3</sup> No. 675.

No. 678

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*  
*No. 325 Telegraphic [C 8695/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, August 24, 1938, 4.15 p.m.

The Prime Minister and I wish to discuss the German-Czechoslovak ques-

tion with you. I shall be grateful therefore if you will arrange to reach London in time for a meeting on the morning of Monday August 29.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sir N. Henderson arrived in London on August 28 and returned to Berlin on August 31. He was present at a meeting of the Cabinet on August 30. See also No. 862, note 2.

No. 679

*Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Lindsay (Washington)*

*No. 701 [C 8694/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *August 24, 1938*

Sir,

The United States Chargé d'Affaires called to see me this afternoon, and I gave him a general account of the situation in regard to Czechoslovakia as it appeared to His Majesty's Government, in the light of the information at their disposal. I told him that we were disposed to fear that, unless a very early settlement of the Sudeten German question could be reached on lines that Herr Hitler would approve, he was contemplating resort to forcible action some time in the latter half of September after the Nuremberg Party Conference. I told Mr. Herschel Johnson that I thought the two recent speeches that had been delivered by the President and the Secretary of State had been most useful, and I expressed the hope that it might perhaps be possible for the President to make another speech in the course of the next fortnight or three weeks in whatever sense he might think appropriate, to act as some deterrent to Herr Hitler, if in fact he was planning action of the kind that we had reason to fear. Mr. Herschel Johnson said that he would readily transmit the suggestion in unofficial form.

2. He then introduced to me Mr. Rublee, who has been appointed director of the new international organisation for the relief of refugees from Germany and Austria, with whom I had a short conversation. Mr. Rublee told me that he was shortly going to Paris to meet the United States Ambassador from Berlin, to discuss with him whether and in what form it might be possible for an approach to be made to the German Government on the questions with which the committee was concerned.

I am, &c.,  
HALIFAX

No. 680

*Letter from Viscount Runciman (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*

*[C 8726/1941/18]*

LORD RUNCIMAN'S MISSION, PRAGUE, *August 24, 1938*

Gwatkin's brief visit to London will give him the opportunity of telling you how my mind has been working. Neville Henderson's last telegram<sup>1</sup> to

<sup>1</sup> No. 662.

you (repeated here) was written without knowledge of the movements of the past week. We could not write or telegraph him about the new basis on which Benes and Hodza are now conversing with the leading Sudeten Ds, and in the absence of this knowledge his suggestions are not useful. Gwatkin can tell you everything in an hour. If an accommodation is not reached I fear an awkward speech at Nuremburg [*sic*]. The best way of forestalling that misfortune was of course to get them round a table—themselves again, on a new basis, with no one from outside, not me or any[? one] else at present. The two sides are face to face with an unpalatable prospect, but all the bending is being done by the Government, although the latter have also their own troubles.

I am inclined to think that some one sent from London to Berlin would find ground for useful conversation. Gwatkin will tell you how best we think this could be managed<sup>2</sup>.

There is very little time to be lost: barely a fortnight before the Nuremburg oration.

Yours ever,  
W. R.

<sup>2</sup> See No. 686 and Appendix II.

#### No. 681

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 25, 1.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 463 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 8710/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 25, 1938

Following from Stopford for Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin.

At a 'Bier-Abend' given last night by Sudeten German delegates, Herr Kundt told me that his conversation with President Benes on August 24 had been confined to a general discussion and that they would not get down to concrete questions until today. They had spent the time in getting to know and understand each other and the atmosphere had been good.

Later in the course of conversation Herr Kundt said that there were two parts of the problem. The first, Sudeten German question which was an internal matter and could be settled between the Sudeten and Czechs. The other was an international problem since it concerned the relations between Czechoslovakia and the Reich. As long as Czechoslovakia remained in the orbit of Russia and France (particularly Russia) there could not be friendly relations between Czechoslovakia and Germany. On the other hand Germany welcomed friendly relations between Great Britain and Czechoslovakia. Herr Kundt said that the question of Czechoslovakia's position and foreign relations was a real [*sic*] one which must be settled by the four great Powers, Germany, Great Britain, France and Italy, and the only real solution lay in a neutral Czechoslovakia.

Repeated to Berlin Saving.

No. 682

*Mr. Shone (Bled) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 25, 7.45 p.m.)*  
*No. 12 Telegraphic [C 8779/1941/18]*

BLED, August 25, 1938, 2.10 p.m.

Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs has confirmed to me that German communication<sup>1</sup> was made in two capitals. German Minister here had made it during general conversation with President of the Council and Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs could not give me its exact terms. He confirmed however that second part of communication referring to France had not been made here.

I submit the following observations.

Communication was obviously made at the moment most likely to embarrass the Little Entente negotiations with Hungary, to weaken the links between Little Entente and France and to break up the Little Entente.

Nevertheless negotiations made as much progress as could reasonably be expected in the circumstances and it is my impression and that of others here that solidarity of Little Entente has been maintained in difficult conditions.

Communication is quite in accord with German mixture of bluff and menace (Sir N. Henderson's telegram No. 361 Saving<sup>2</sup>) and it is hard to estimate proportion of the two ingredients in this case. In this connexion it seems of some importance whether communication was also made in other capitals.

Yugoslav President of the Council who has hitherto professed belief in pacific intentions of German Government has at least admitted that German communication represents a change of tone. This was also confirmed by Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs.<sup>3</sup>

Repeated to Berlin, Paris, Prague and Bucharest.

<sup>1</sup> See Nos. 667 and 670.

<sup>2</sup> No. 573.

<sup>3</sup> In a second telegram Mr. Shone reported that the Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs had telephoned that the President of the Council did not regard the German communication, "made as it was, as a "démarche" or as a "menace"."

No. 683

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 25, 11.25 p.m.)*  
*No. 464 Telegraphic [C 8733/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 25, 1938, 6.15 p.m.

Your telegram No. 3<sup>1</sup> to Bled.

Without any enquiry on my part Czechoslovak Minister for Foreign Affairs has repeated this information to me adding some details.

The Yugoslav Prime Minister and Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs had received these representations from German representatives in their

<sup>1</sup> No. 670.

respective capitals a few days before August 20 on which day or the following day the information was passed on to Dr. Krofta at Bled. It was understood that representations had been based on circular instruction; that perhaps similar communications had been made by German representatives in other capitals. The German warning had been that while Germany wished for peace she could not tolerate the present state of Sudeten affairs much longer. If no substantial concessions were made Germany would probably have to intervene by all means possible. The German Minister in Bucharest, Herr Fabricius, had added that France would bear the responsibility if she thereupon attacked Germany. The German Minister in Yugoslavia, Baron von Heeren, had made some comment to the effect that Germany would not allow herself to continue to be led by the nose.

While Dr. Krofta did not disclose whether his Little Entente colleagues had made any comment of their own in passing on this warning he said he regarded it as serious.

Repeated to Bled, Berlin, Paris and Bucharest.

#### No. 684

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 26, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 466 Telegraphic [C 8739/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 25, 1938, 8.20 p.m.

Following for Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin.

. . .<sup>1</sup> who knows conditions well having been here for nearly twenty years has pointed out to me that Sudeten Party leaders can hardly be expected to accept any solution except a very radical one in view of example of Austria. The more moderate the solution which they may be willing to accept the more essential it is for them to secure prior approval of Herr Hitler. I mention this point for its possible bearing on any communication to Herr Hitler which may be under consideration by His Majesty's Government.

On the Czech side . . .<sup>1</sup> feared that none of the Coalition Parties would care to accept the responsibility for a far-reaching solution for fear of being denounced as traitors by their opponents at the polls. He therefore thought it might be necessary for a solution to be put through by a temporary and non-party Cabinet of officials. I have not heard of any such Cabinet being in prospect and of course failing some elaborate explanation a Cabinet of this nature would no doubt be represented as a stage towards, or instrument of, a dictatorship exercised by the President and the Army.

. . .<sup>1</sup> favoured a solution on 'Gau' lines. His name should of course on no account be mentioned.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> The name of a foreign (not Czechoslovak) diplomat is here omitted.

No. 685

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 25, 9.11 p.m.)*  
*No. 467 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 8734/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 25, 1938

Following for Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin from Lord Runciman.

Meetings today have gone favourably on solution of practical problems. Our young friend<sup>1</sup> seeks the approval of his Committee tonight secretly. I think that this is the best to be hoped for at this stage although I cannot be sure yet that negotiators can carry their parties with them.

<sup>1</sup> Herr Kundt.

No. 686

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 235 Telegraphic [C 8715/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, August 25, 1938, 11.20 p.m.

Following from the Secretary of State for Lord Runciman:—

The present development as explained by Gwatkin is more encouraging than I had expected and completely changes the situation. The fact that new negotiations have now been opened by Messrs. Benes and Hodza with the Sudeten leaders on a new basis which goes so far towards meeting Sudeten requirements provides not only a new setting for our future action, but a new hope of a peaceful solution.

The important point now is that the German Government should take no step to wreck these new negotiations but should give them their approval. It is particularly important that Hitler should at least so adapt his forthcoming speech at Nuremberg as not to discourage this new approach.

Gwatkin has suggested that we should take advantage of Henlein's offer to go to Germany and persuade Hitler and others not only to support these new negotiations but also to seek a basis of a general settlement with Great Britain. I certainly approve of this; but since I am doubtful whether this in itself will be enough I am considering a direct approach to Hitler from another quarter.

As you know, the Prime Minister and I have recently made a direct approach to Hitler and this has not been well received. It is our own impression that any such approaches are apt to be misrepresented and foiled by hostile or obstructive influences, notably in the German Foreign Office. We have therefore to find a way of approach so authoritative that it will cross all such obstacles. After our recent experience I fear that a further direct appeal by His Majesty's Government might easily do more harm than good. Moreover, might it not be open to misunderstanding if His Majesty's Government



were now to intervene in the course of negotiations which fall essentially within the scope of your independent mission? In these circumstances, I am convinced that you are yourself the most suitable and in fact the only person who can successfully appeal direct to Hitler in the present situation.

It would indeed be difficult for Hitler to refuse such an approach on your part without showing to all the world that his policy aims at war rather than at peace.

My idea would be that you should in a telegram addressed direct to Hitler ask him, in light of the recent developments, for an opportunity *before the Parteitag* to put before him personally your views on the situation as derived from the experience you have gained during your mission.

If you agree, as I strongly hope you will, my immediately succeeding telegram supplies you with the text of the necessary telegram. I suggest an immediate telegram because time is so short, and for the particular reason explained in my next paragraph.

I am in favour of Henlein being encouraged to impress upon Hitler and the Party leaders that the new basis of discussion provides a good chance of satisfying the essential Sudeten demands, and therefore that the Sudeten German Party should be allowed and indeed encouraged to proceed with them. Henlein will however be certainly subjected to strong German pressure of a negative character in certain quarters, and it would therefore in my opinion be highly desirable that your visit should if possible precede, or at least synchronise with, his. I realise however that circumstances may not permit this in view of the fact that we are working against time.

I had intended to instruct His Majesty's Minister at Prague to urge upon President Benes to lose no time in meeting the Sudeten German requirements in as large a measure as possible in view of imminent danger from Germany. In the present circumstances a message of warning is obviously no longer necessary. Do you think that it would be useful if, in its place, Mr. Newton should give the President a message of encouragement to press on with his present initiative?

No doubt it will be difficult for the President to maintain complete secrecy in regard to his present negotiations. I think, however, you should urge upon him the importance of keeping the details of his new proposals out of the press for as long as possible, in order to avoid polemics in the press of the various Czech parties. Further, I am afraid that however favourable the new proposals may be to the Sudetens, those elements in Germany who do not want a peaceful solution will, if they get hold of the details, try to represent them as impracticable and inadequate.

The timetable I suggest should be as follows:—

Gwatkin, as soon as he returns, should get in touch with Henlein and ask him if he can start on his mission early next week (i.e. beginning August 28). Meanwhile you will have made your application to Hitler. If his reply is favourable it will be necessary for you to see him before the end of that week. If it is unfavourable we shall at least know where we stand and what to expect at Nuremberg.

I earnestly trust that you will find it possible to act on this suggestion. It was discussed and unanimously approved as being the only really promising course at a meeting this morning at which Gwatkin was present.

No. 687

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 236 Telegraphic [C 8715/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *August 25, 1938, 11.30 p.m.*

Following from the Secretary of State for Lord Runciman.

Telegram to Hitler suggested in my immediately preceding telegram<sup>1</sup> might be as follows:—

Your Excellency, I hope that I may count on your sympathetic support in the efforts I am making to help in the search for a satisfactory settlement of the Sudeten German question. I believe that recent developments offer an opportunity for such a settlement if it is quickly taken. I should be grateful therefore if Your Excellency would allow me to call upon you as soon as convenient to you in order that before the Parteitag I may have the honour of explaining to you personally my views on the situation as it now presents itself. Runciman.

The telegram should be sent through the post *en clair*.

<sup>1</sup> No. 686.

No. 688

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 237 Telegraphic [C 8710/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *August 25, 1938, 11.30 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 463.<sup>1</sup>

Following for Stopford from Gwatkin:—

Second paragraph of your telegram makes us uneasy, viz., Kundt's assertion that there are two parts of the problem. If he had said there are two problems this would have been more accurate and in accordance with Henlein's assurances given during his visit here that he would not raise the question of Czechoslovakia's external relations in connexion with the internal problem. Herr Kundt and the President are of course at liberty to discuss what they will but if the Sudeten representatives raise this matter with Lord Runciman's Mission they should be reminded of the above and especially of Henlein's assurances. It would be deplorable if settlement of internal problem were made dependent on external problem.

<sup>1</sup> No. 681.

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 26)*

*No. 415 Saving: Telegraphic [C 8736/1941/18]*

BERLIN, August 25, 1938

It may be taken for granted that Herr Hitler at Nuremberg will define Germany's standpoint in Sudeten question. It may equally be taken for granted that Germany will now never agree to any solution which does not ensure absolute autonomy for Sudeten.

Possible three alternatives at Nuremberg would therefore be for Herr Hitler to announce (a) that he will still be prepared to recognise integrity of a neutralised Czechoslovakia if complete home rule is accorded to Sudeten, or (b) that plebiscite based on right of self-determination is only solution which he will accept, or (c) that British having failed to bring Benes to reason Germany claims her inalienable right to secure herself in her own way the lives and interests of her German brethren across the frontier.

In my opinion it would be quite useless, short of a definite threat of war, to try to induce Herr Hitler to say less than (a). If there is further delay he may not even accept (a). I am equally of opinion that it would be impolitic to repeat our warning of May 21 prior to any indication as to what constitutes Lord Runciman's conception of a just settlement. The moment for such a warning would be once Lord Runciman's views are known and have been approved by His Majesty's Government.

If we are therefore not to lose the initiative I would submit for consideration following proposal:—

Could not Lord Runciman report to His Majesty's Government what he intends to recommend to Czech Government as basis for negotiation, say Swiss cantonal autonomy, as constituting in his opinion only possible solution affording any definite prospect of peace? It would then be open to His Majesty's Government to notify simultaneously French and German Governments of this recommendation and to ask their co-operation in persuading Czech Government to agree to it. French Government might be informed that if Czech Government were to refuse only alternative would be either plebiscite or warning to Czechs that they would be left to their fate. Germany might be notified on the other hand that if she refuses to accept such a solution and uses force to upset it we shall regard it as a *casus belli*. Czech Government could be assured that inasmuch as this solution might be regarded as weakening her capacity for self-defence Powers will take steps to arrange for guarantee of her independence on Swiss lines. She might also be given certain financial or other compensations to enable her to rearrange her defences.

Repeated to Prague and Paris.

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 27)*  
*No. 413 Saving: Telegraphic [R 7278/2759/67]*

PRAGUE, August 25, 1938

My telegram No. 465.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Krofta recounted to me that on his departure from Prague<sup>2</sup> the outlook for negotiations with Hungary had seemed extremely serious, although he had borne in mind the hope which I had expressed that no rupture would be allowed to take place. Hungarian Government had demanded recognition of a Hungarian national group ('Volksgruppe'), which was more than the Reich Government had done on behalf of Sudeten Germans. Moreover, Hungarian Government were not even prepared to grant reciprocity, which was a commitment for Czechoslovakia as there were 150,000 Slovaks in Hungary. There had then come an unexpected change in Hungarian attitude, which did not, however, at first extend to Czechoslovakia. It was not until Yugoslavia and Roumania had replied that any commitment must be made with all or none of the partners of the Little Entente that Hungarian Government had agreed to inclusion of Czechoslovak Government. Subsequent discussions for a settlement of minorities question would be continued with Hungarian Government by Yugoslav Prime Minister on behalf of Little Entente as a whole, though Czechoslovakia remained willing to accept some discriminatory treatment in this issue as compared with her partners.

2. In the course of Little Entente discussions reference had been made to report that in the event of German attack on Czechoslovakia, German troops might march through Hungary, whose Government would perhaps content herself with a merely formal protest. In reply to an enquiry by Dr. Krofta, both Dr. Stoyadinovitch and M. Comnène had immediately expressed the opinion that if this occurred, their countries would regard Hungary as an accomplice and act accordingly. This question would, however, I gathered, be further discussed with the three Little Entente representatives at the Assembly at Geneva on the 12th September. In confidential protocol of proceedings at Bled it had been reaffirmed that obligations of mutual assistance remained valid if any member of the Little Entente were attacked by Hungary, notwithstanding her renunciation of use of force.

3. As regards League of Nations reform, Czechoslovakia and I gathered also her two partners would prefer the maintenance of article 16 in its present form, but would be prepared to consider changes in agreement with England and France.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. In this telegram Mr. Newton reported that Dr. Krofta deprecated as inopportune and embarrassing the comments in sections of the British press that the conclusion of a provisional agreement between Czechoslovakia and Hungary would be 'a blow to Germany'.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. to attend the meeting of the Permanent Council of the Little Entente at Bled.

4. In reply to proposals made by Herr Martius<sup>3</sup> in Prague and in other capitals for changes in administration of the Danube, the Little Entente had taken the line that they welcomed German co-operation, but wished to maintain international character of present commission and participation of present non-riparian States. Dr. Stoyadinovitch had remarked, for example, that Yugoslavia enjoyed good relations with Germany, but did not want to enjoy them alone in her company.

5. As regards establishment of Embassies, Czechoslovakia had been unwilling to following [*sic*] the example of her partners on the ground that it would be unsuitable for her to do so at this threatening juncture. My impression of Dr. Krofta's attitude was that he would also deprecate establishment of Embassies.

Repeated to Belgrade, Bucharest, Budapest and Berlin.

<sup>3</sup> Herr Martius, a member of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accompanied by a number of German officials had been visiting the Danubian states to discuss German proposals for excluding the non-riparian States from participation in the control of Danubian navigation.

No. 691

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Campbell (Paris)*

*No. 1915 [C 8727/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, August 25, 1938

Sir,

M. Cambon, the French Chargé d'Affaires, called to see me this morning. He told me that the French Government had received the information of the German communication made to the Governments of the Little Entente to the effect that, unless a satisfactory settlement of the Czechoslovak problem had been reached by the end of September, the German Government would find it necessary to take appropriate measures to resolve it. The French Government considered that this was a very menacing communication, and it was the first formal intimation of the German attitude that had been forthcoming. Setting this beside the report of the interview between General Vuillemin and Field-Marshal Göring which the Political Director had made to you as reported in your telegram No. 524 Saving,<sup>1</sup> of the 20th August, the French Government thought that the situation was ominous. Accordingly, M. Cambon had received instructions from his Government to ask us to consider the desirability of repeating at Berlin, in appropriate form, our warnings of the 21st May and the 24th March. The French Government naturally did not seek any immediate answer from us on this point, but wished us to consider the desirability of taking action in this sense.

2. I told M. Cambon that I could, however, answer his question at once. I said that we had, in fact, made a communication in Berlin at the time of Lord Runciman's appointment, in which we had expressed our regret that that appointment had not been more warmly welcomed by the German

<sup>1</sup> No. 655.

Government, and had taken occasion to say that we attached great importance to the reaching of a settlement through Lord Runciman's efforts inasmuch as, if this were not found possible, the peace of every one of the Great Powers of Europe, in our view, might be placed in danger. Furthermore, a fortnight ago, in relation to the military measures that the German Government were taking, we had pointed out in Berlin the inevitable anxiety that these would create and had repeated our apprehensions concerning the possible repercussions on the peace of Europe to which we had made reference in our earlier communication. I had no doubt, therefore, that the French Government would feel that we had done everything that was possible in the sense of a discreet repetition of warning, and I was myself sensible, as no doubt they would be, of the danger of diluting the effect of warnings by excessive repetition. We should, however, continue to watch for any opportunity of any useful action on such lines.

3. I went on to tell M. Cambon that we regarded the position with no less anxiety than the French Government. It seemed clear from information at our disposal, which no doubt they shared, that Herr Hitler was greatly preoccupied with Czechoslovakia and that he was moving to a point where he would determine, if he had not already done so, to secure a settlement by the end of September, without force if it were possible, but contemplating the use of force if no settlement were possible without it.

4. I proceeded to tell M. Cambon that the position of His Majesty's Government was as defined on the 24th March by the Prime Minister and that we could not go beyond that. Quite apart from merits, the certain result of any attempt to accept on behalf of this country any more specific commitment would be to evoke violent opposition from several quarters here, and also probably in the Dominions, which would have an immediate effect exactly contrary to that which a stronger statement might hope to achieve. In these circumstances I thought that the right policy for both our Governments was to do everything in our power to keep the Germans guessing and prevent them from thinking that the danger of any extension of hostilities arising from the use of force by them against Czechoslovakia was in any way negligible. But in saying this, I felt bound to draw his attention particularly to the telegram sent to Sir E. Phipps on the 22nd May<sup>2</sup> and to the assurance that M. Bonnet had given in reply<sup>3</sup> to representations made by Sir E. Phipps on the strength of that telegram, to the effect that the French Government would not dream of taking any action which might have the result of exposing them to German attack without ample consultation with His Majesty's Government. I further reminded M. Cambon that Sir E. Phipps had had a further conversation with M. Bonnet on this point on the 16th July.<sup>4</sup>

5. I then asked M. Cambon what, in fact, he thought the French would do if the Germans, in spite of all our joint efforts, did, in fact, march into

<sup>2</sup> No. 271 in Volume I of this Series.

<sup>3</sup> See No. 286 in Volume I of this Series.

<sup>4</sup> See No. 502 in Volume I of this Series.

Czechoslovakia. M. Cambon said that he would prefer me to put this question to M. Corbin. In his judgment, French opinion was divided, the trade unions being very strongly pro-Czech and the upper classes being principally concerned to keep out of war. His own estimate was that the immediate situation in such an event would be confused, but that, if the Czechs put up a fight, after a few days feeling would tend to grow in France that they had to support them. As to how such support would be given, M. Cambon naturally could not speak. I said to him that I reluctantly always came back to one very clear conclusion. This was that, once our preventive efforts had failed to deter the German Government from the attack, it was unpleasantly true that no degree of support that the French Government or we or the Soviet Government could give Czechoslovakia would, in fact, be likely to prevent her from being overrun by the German attack. What we could do was to fight a war for months or years in order to compel Germany to give up what she had *ex hypothesi* collared, and when we had done this we might, no doubt, find it very difficult to re-create Czechoslovakia as it existed to-day. In these circumstances and looking at the matter purely as a Czechoslovak issue, I could not think that a European war was justifiable, if by any means this could be avoided. There was, however, of course, the much wider issue of general resistance to aggression and all that that involved, and, more particularly, the particular obligations under which the French Government lay, but even looking at the problem from this wider standpoint, it was evidently not less essential to see facts as they were. M. Cambon appeared to recognise the force of these observations, but said that the signature of the French Government had been given, and could not lightly be ignored without depreciating its value for all time. I assured M. Cambon that we here were fully sensible of the French situation, and should wish to keep in the closest contact with them as the position developed. The moral of it all was to reinforce the necessity of securing a peaceful settlement, if by any means this could properly be achieved, and it might be that we should wish to approach the French Government with a view to exerting further pressure upon the Czechoslovak Government, if this should appear desirable. I was proposing to see Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin this morning, and should be in a better position to judge as to this after doing so. We should, of course, be informing the French Government of anything that Mr. Gwatkin might have to report upon the progress of Lord Runciman's efforts.

I am, &c.,  
HALIFAX

No. 692

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 27)*

*No. 899 [C 8827/1941/18]*

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, August 25, 1938

My Lord,

I have the honour to transmit to Your Lordship herewith a despatch

addressed to me by the Military Attaché to this Embassy in which he discusses the chances of a war between Germany and Czechoslovakia during the coming autumn together with the possible effect of British and French intervention or the likelihood of such intervention. Colonel Mason-MacFarlane's conclusions are gloomy, but the situation as seen from here gives every ground for anxiety and I cannot but endorse his appreciation of the situation, which corresponds closely to the views I have already expressed to you.

I have, &c.,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

ENCLOSURE IN No. 692

BERLIN, *August 24, 1938*

Sir,

1. I have the honour to submit to Your Excellency a short résumé of the situation, as I see it at the moment from the military point of view.

2. It is extremely difficult from available information to gauge accurately the scope of the test mobilisation now in progress in the German Army. The operation has already commenced and, to a varying extent, Reservists have been called up at least in Bavaria, Austria, Saxony, Hesse, Brandenburg and Pomerania. I am unable to give any details of the Reserve Formations involved, but it is generally thought by observers here that in the meantime it is intended to embody at least seven Reserve Divisions.<sup>1</sup> My own impression is that the test mobilisation is being carried out progressively, and that the programme involves the mobilisation or at any rate partial mobilisation of forces on the lines originally explained to me by the War Ministry. I see little or no prospect of any of these mobilised forces being demobilised before the Parteitag at Nürnberg.

3. There is no doubt whatever that the country as a whole is in a state of considerable apprehension. Moderate opinion is particularly disturbed, and many people regard war against Czecho-Slovakia [*sic*] this autumn as a certainty, while few deny its possibility and even probability.

4. Both official and other sources have latterly endeavoured to impress me with the extreme danger of the existing situation, and to stress the fact that in their opinion a very great deal—in fact almost everything—depends upon Britain's attitude.

5. Feeling in the country runs high. Its normal life has been greatly disorganised by the various military measures recently introduced in connection with the immense efforts being made to ensure the rapid security of the western frontier and the test mobilisation. Industry and trade are suffering continual dislocation and forward business presents immense difficulties. The result is widespread discontent and grumbling and a growing conviction that all these measures are leading inevitably to war.

6. I find few indications of a genuine hope or belief that Lord Runciman

<sup>1</sup> According to French information, this process had taken place.



will be able to achieve a satisfactory and peaceful solution to the Sudeten question.

7. The country as a whole seems to be convinced that Herr Hitler is determined to force a solution this year. The spirit in the country is getting worse, and there is fear lest Herr Hitler be tempted to endeavour to restore enthusiasm by one of his well-timed *coups*. It is possible, although it seems unlikely, that the bad spirit in the country may deter Herr Hitler from risking a war in which the country is not really behind him. There is however much doubt as to whether he can at the moment contemplate accepting the blow to his prestige which an indefinite prolongation of the Sudeten impasse would involve. His warlike preparations have already given the country the impression that he is determined if necessary to use force, and should all these preparations lead to nothing the country, although greatly relieved, would be convinced that Herr Hitler had again suffered a rebuff.

8. All people of moderate views who have approached me on the subject stress the urgent necessity for speedy action if calamity is to be averted. The idea is widely prevalent that unless Lord Runciman produces a basis for negotiation, satisfactory to the Germans, prior to the Partei Tag, Herr Hitler will decide and declare at Nürnberg that he cannot delay any more and that direct action must ensue. There is however also a widespread conviction that if Lord Runciman's solution is acceptable to the Germans the chances that Benes will accept it are very small.

9. Under these latter conditions it is thought that Herr Hitler would act almost automatically in the hope that France and Great Britain would be most unlikely to intervene actively on the Czechs' behalf.

10. There is practically no doubt that the Party Extremists would like above all things a short sharp war with Czecho-Slovakia [*sic*] in a clear ring. They even imagine that if the Czechs felt that France and England were unprepared to come to their assistance another bloodless victory of the Austrian type might be achieved. Such a possibility is however regarded as extremely improbable in General Staff circles.

11. The Army has absolutely no wish to embark on a war so long as there is any possibility of its developing into a general conflagration. The War Economists<sup>2</sup> have the most pronounced views on the subject. The Air Force attitude is less certain, but the fact remains that the Air Force is a most important factor and that it is relatively far better placed *vis-à-vis* possible opposition than the Army.

12. One is continually hearing that almost everything depends upon the line taken by Britain. This is certainly the view of most moderate opinion in Germany.

13. Most people think that unless Britain decides to fight over the Sudeten question France will not fight either. In such a case nothing can prevent Herr Hitler imposing his will, by force if need be.

14. If Britain decides to fight, and says so, it is quite possible that Herr Hitler may decide that the game is not worth the candle and that he may risk the

<sup>2</sup> i.e. the 'Wehrwirtschaftsstab'.

consequences of suffering what must appear to be a severe rebuff. This is however unlikely, and his appreciation of the military situation seems to be that the present is a most favourable moment for embarking on a war which he possibly regards as almost inevitable sooner or later.

15. Are we prepared to fight Germany now on general principles but with a possibly unsound cause, the Sudeten question, as our reason? If we are, and are prepared to say so, in the circumstances detailed below, before Nürnberg, there is an outside possibility that we might avert or at any rate postpone catastrophe. If we are not, many Germans think that France, in spite of her declarations, will not fight. That may be the great danger, as they are almost certain to take action on this conviction.

16. My impression is that whatever we may decide to do or be forced to do there is the gravest possibility that we shall see the progressive test mobilisation now in progress developing into a general mobilisation as a consequence of Herr Hitler's possible declaration at Nürnberg. We have to decide whether the moment is ripe to say 'No' or whether we are prepared to let Herr Hitler attempt what he hopes to be a rapid and possibly bloodless victory over the Czechs. Whether or not we decide to say 'No' must be settled at once. To have even a possibility of the deterring effect for which we might still hope we must say so immediately after Lord Runciman's pronouncement and before the Partei Tag.

17. Most people of moderate views with whom I have discussed the question are convinced of the absolute necessity for some pronouncement from Lord Runciman within the next week.

18. There is one final point which I would like to stress. It is true that the prospect of war involving England and France is terribly unpopular in Germany. It would however be a great mistake to assume that the German nation would march unwillingly. I have no doubt but that Herr Goebbels and his fellow demagogues would have little difficulty in representing such a war as a preventive one forced on Germany on account of Germany's support of the principle of self-determination. I believe that at the beginning at any rate, and throughout a short war with initial successes, it would be possible to achieve and maintain quite genuine enthusiasm.

I have, &c.,

F. N. MASON-MACFARLANE  
*Colonel, Military Attaché.*

#### No. 693

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 26, 5.15 p.m.)*  
*No. 468 Telegraphic [C 8793/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 26, 1938, 3.37 p.m.

My telegram No. 464.<sup>1</sup>

At an evening party last night Minister for Foreign Affairs said that he had now learnt that similar representations had been made by German

<sup>1</sup> No. 683.

representative in Moscow. Soviet reply had been a counter-warning that France would undoubtedly come to assist Czechoslovakia, that Great Britain could hardly remain neutral and that Soviet Government would fulfil their obligations to the letter.

Repeated to Berlin, Bled, Paris and Bucharest.

**No. 694**

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 26, 6.35 p.m.)*  
*No. 469 Telegraphic [C 8819/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 26, 1938, 4.40 p.m.

According to an extract quoted from 'Daily Telegraph' of August 25 it is felt in London that a successful issue to Sudeten negotiations is impossible so long as freedom of decision of Sudeten Party is limited by outside influences. It is of course true that provocative propaganda and sabre-rattling is seriously endangering prospects of a peaceful solution. But Herr Hitler himself could hardly cut off German influence if he would and nothing is to be gained by ignoring fundamental fact that decisive influence, whether remaining behind the scenes or clearly revealed, is and will remain the Reich. My own belief therefore is that prospects of a solution will be enhanced the more Herr Hitler can be brought out into the open and his real responsibility for success of present negotiations brought home to him, of course in as non-provocative and indeed friendly a way as possible. (See in this connexion first paragraph of my telegram No. 466.<sup>1</sup>)

Lord Runciman concurs.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 684.

**No. 695**

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 26, 6.50 p.m.)*  
*No. 471 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 8796/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 26, 1938

Following for Secretary of State from Lord Runciman:

I deeply appreciate suggestion made in your telegram No. 235<sup>1</sup> that I should make a direct approach to Herr Hitler and I agree that something more than Herr Henlein's efforts may be necessary. But after careful consideration I cannot but feel that the disadvantages of a personal approach by me definitely outweigh the advantages. Whatever success has been achieved here so far has been due to a policy of holding aloof until I was asked to intervene and I would be making a mistake if I were to broaden my task and extend my activities beyond frontiers of Czechoslovakia at a moment when two parties have once more started negotiations.

<sup>1</sup> No. 686.

It is indeed unlikely that the Sudeten negotiators have neglected the German factor or that negotiations would have been resumed if Herr Hitler were opposed to them. If I were to suggest to him the possibility of a general settlement with Great Britain I would almost certainly be regarded as representative of Great Britain and my independent position would to that extent be compromised with, I fear, unhappy effects on the progress already made in Prague.

Moreover I would suggest to you that price of failure in Berlin would be to make solution here impossible and in the event of hostilities, morally to commit Great Britain on the side of Czechoslovakia.

These amongst other reasons have weighed with me in arriving at negative decision especially at a moment when I am concentrating my efforts on problems here.

No. 696

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 88 Saving: Telegraphic [C 8854/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, August 26, 1938

Mr. Gwatkin who has returned to London for a few days informed me on August 25 of the progress made by the Runciman Mission.

The questions within the scope of Lord Runciman's mission are: (1) constitutional; (2) political, and (3) economic.

The constitutional question, viz. the provision of some degree of home rule for the Sudeten Germans within the Czechoslovak Republic is the immediate issue confronting Lord Runciman. His first task was to make himself acquainted with the history of the question, with the principal persons concerned, and with the suggestions for its solution proposed by the two sides, viz. by the Sudeten German Party in the 'Sketches' submitted to the Czech Government on June 7, and by the Czech Government in their draft nationality statute, language bill and administrative reform bill.

This enquiry was pursued by Lord Runciman's staff making summaries of these proposals and submitting them in draft to the respective sides, so as to obtain agreed documents which would adequately represent the point of view of each side.

At the meeting held on August 17 between the representatives of the Sudeten Party and those of the Government it became clear that neither of these sets of proposals was sufficiently acceptable to the other side to permit further negotiations on this basis. It seemed as if the next step might be for Lord Runciman to propose a new basis for the negotiations to be resumed. The Mission had begun to prepare for such an eventuality. But on August 21 it was definitely learned that a new basis had in fact been prepared under M. Benes' instructions and was being considered (rather favourably, on the whole) by the Sudeten German leaders. Lord Runciman saw Dr. Benes and M. Hodza on August 23 and also Herr Kundt; it was clear that the two

Czechs were in agreement, and that Herr Kundt was prepared to negotiate on the new basis, though somewhat doubtful as to the form and prospects of the negotiation. I understand from Mr. Gwatkin that Herr Henlein also considers the new basis a suitable one for negotiation.

MM. Benes, Hodza, Kundt and Sebekowsky met for the opening of the discussions on the morning of August 24. It is understood from Sudeten German sources, and confirmed by the President, that the basis of discussion was to be:—

1. Three local autonomous districts in the Sudeten German lands.
2. Exchange of officials, i.e. Czech officials in German lands to be removed, German officials in Czech lands to be restored to German lands—to begin at once.
3. Independent budget for the three districts.
4. Loan from Central Government to the three districts.
5. Commission to meet within one to three months to decide on necessary changes in the constitution.
6. Propaganda and Press Armistice.
7. Withdrawal of State police from German districts if all goes quietly.

I have since learnt that the meeting held on August 24 was confined to a general discussion but that the atmosphere was good. A further meeting to examine the concrete questions at issue was to have been held on August 25 and this, I now hear, went favourably.

M. Hodza has expressed the opinion that the coming week ought to show whether agreement is possible or not. Lord Runciman is not prepared to act as arbiter of right or wrong in these new negotiations. He has asked to be kept informed of their progress and has offered his services to help remove obstacles if they arise.

The political side of the problem is concerned with the question of the integrity and security of the Czechoslovak Republic. This depends on German policy and on relations between Germany and Czechoslovakia. M. Kundt told Lord Runciman on August 23 that at the meeting with MM. Benes and Hodza on August 24, not only internal questions would be discussed but also matters of foreign policy, e.g. the Soviet Treaty and relations between Germany and Czechoslovakia. In this connexion I have pointed out to Mr. Gwatkin that the internal question and the question of foreign policy represent two separate problems rather than two parts of the same problem. The President and Herr Kundt are, of course, at liberty to discuss what they will, but I have suggested that this distinction should be pointed out to the Sudeten representatives if they raise the question of foreign policy and that they should be reminded of the assurances given by Herr Henlein in London to the effect that he would not raise the question of Czechoslovakia's external relations in connexion with the internal problem. It would seriously complicate matters if at this juncture a settlement of the internal problem were made dependent on the external problem.

The economic problem centres on the distress and unemployment in the Sudeten German lands, a distress which has persisted since 1930 and is due

to various causes. It constitutes a suitable background for political discontent; it is a problem which requires urgent attention; but it is realised by Lord Runciman's Mission that the present phase of the Sudeten German question is entirely racial and cannot be solved by economic remedies. The Mission has had some interviews with persons concerned with economic affairs in the Sudeten country, and has had one or two opportunities of seeing conditions on the spot. Lord Runciman is therefore aware of the nature and gravity of this side of the problem, but has not had time to study it in any detail.

Copies to Paris, Rome, Warsaw, Budapest and Prague.

No. 697

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 27)*

*No. 472 Telegraphic [C 8800/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 26, 1938

I have received from a reliable journalistic source text of a manifesto which has apparently been issued to-day to Sudeten Party under signature[s] of Deputies Frank and Kollner. Following is a summary:

Recent attacks on our comrades by Marxist terrorists show that these are being carried out according to plan with object of giving foreigners the false impression that there is serious opposition to Sudeten movement in Sudeten area. Hitherto our members have in accordance with our instructions suffered these attacks patiently and even renounced legal right of self-defence. 'In view of latest developments the party leadership can no longer hold itself responsible for freedom and property of its followers. It therefore withdraws instructions issued to renounce right of self-defence and leaves its followers free to make use of that right in all cases where they are attacked. It merely directs members strictly to observe legal conditions and limits.'

I have also seen uncensored edition of a Sudeten German weekly due to appear tomorrow which publishes what purports to be an order issued on July 30th by Communist leader Dr. Gottwald to all leaders of Czech Communist Party to prepare for illegal action in order to destroy those parties, e.g. the Agrarian and Henlein Parties, which are most dangerous to Communist cause. Document<sup>1</sup> contains names of various group leaders assigned to different aspects of the work.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> In a subsequent telegram (No. 475 of August 27) Mr. Newton reported that 'from internal evidence this document would appear to be a forgery'.

No. 698

*Note by Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin*

*[C 8915/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, August 26, 1938

The Counsellor of the French Embassy, in the course of his conversation

with Sir Orme Sargent this afternoon, produced a message typed in English and coming, so he said, from a Soviet official source here.

It was to the effect that the German Ambassador in Moscow had notified M. Litvinov that if the Czech Government failed to give all that was required to the Sudeten Germans, and if Lord Runciman's mission ended (as it doubtless would) in a failure, then the German Government would take action by force if necessary, to bring the Czech Government to reason.

M. Litvinov had replied advising the German Government to leave Czechoslovakia alone. If they were to attack Czechoslovakia then the Soviet Union would go to her assistance under the obligations of her treaty, and France would no doubt also carry out her obligations under her treaty, and Great Britain would support France.

F. ASHTON-GWATKIN

No. 699

*Letter from M. Cambon to Sir O. Sargent*  
[C 8792/1941/18]

AMBASSADE DE FRANCE, À LONDRES, 26 août 1938

Mon Cher Sargent,

Ainsi que je vous l'ai dit cet après-midi, je n'avais pas encore reçu hier, lors de ma visite à Lord Halifax, les instructions de mon Gouvernement au sujet des démarches allemandes à Belgrade et à Bucarest. Elles se réfèrent, vous le savez, à des opérations militaires contre la Tchécoslovaquie. Vous en avez d'ailleurs reçu la confirmation par votre Représentant en Yougoslavie.

M. Bonnet estime que ces démarches nous éclairent sur les intentions du Reich. Il pense que nos deux Gouvernements assumeraient une très lourde responsabilité s'ils ne donnaient pas en temps utile un nouvel et très net avertissement à Berlin.

Ainsi que je viens de vous le rappeler, nous faisons de notre mieux à Paris et à Londres pour permettre à Lord Runciman de faire œuvre utile à Prague. Nous ne cessons de donner des conseils de modération et de prudence au Gouvernement tchèque, qui en tient compte. En contrepartie, il conviendrait que le Gouvernement allemand exerçât sur les Chefs des Sudètes une action analogue. Promettre au contraire à ceux-ci un appui inconditionnel, et telle sera l'interprétation des démarches faites dans les deux autres pays de la Petite Entente, ruinerait vos efforts et les nôtres.

Votre Gouvernement estimera peut-être devoir choisir lui-même la forme sous laquelle il jugerait préférable de réaliser la proposition de M. Georges Bonnet.

Bien à vous  
ROGER CAMBON

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 30)*

*No. 907 [C 8911/1941/18]*

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *August 26, 1938*

His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin presents his compliments to H.M. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit to him the under-mentioned report from H.M. Military Attaché.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 700

BERLIN, *August 26, 1938*

*The Ambassador.*

I saw Major von Mellenthin, the Head of the Attaché-Gruppe, this morning.

I endeavoured to lead him on to the same ground which he had covered in his recent talk with Major Strong at Dresden. (Vide my No. 879<sup>1</sup> of 24th August.)

He was nothing like so frank with me as he had been with Major Strong, and was sparring with me and choosing his words most carefully the whole time.

The gist of his remarks was that it was essential to find a speedy solution to the Sudeten question, as people could not be expected to be patient indefinitely. The biggest menace to peace at the moment was the possibility of a 'flare up' in Sudeten country.

He emphasised the impossibility of the situation in Czechoslovakia, and laid the blame for it on the Treaty of Versailles. He pointed out that it was up to the creators of the Treaty to help in finding a solution to the present difficulty. I said that it was our earnest wish to assist in doing so, and that we were doing much to help. I hoped, and so did all England, that Lord Runciman's mediation might prove successful. Von Mellenthin replied that so far the Czechs had given no evidence of any intention to meet legitimate German aspirations, neither had Lord Runciman produced any plan. He added that he had heard that Lord Runciman was on the point of leaving for London or had already left. I told him that I had no knowledge of any such journey being contemplated, and made clear to him Lord Runciman's position. His conception of Lord Runciman's 'terms of reference' was as wrong as that of most Germans I have recently met. I had to agree that so far the Czechs had not given a great deal of proof of attempting to reach an understanding, but stressed their difficulties.

Von Mellenthin spent some time emphasising that the work now in progress on the western defences, and also the other military measures now being taken were necessitated by the fact that Germany had so much leeway to make up, and had had so little time to do it. He admitted that the sudden increase in military activity at this moment was ill-timed, and was most

<sup>1</sup> Not printed.



anxious to gain my impressions of the Foreign Press reactions to it. He concluded by expressing a hope that a peaceful solution might be found, but again stressed the fact that such a solution must be found quickly or patience might give out.

F. N. MASON-MACFARLANE  
*Colonel, Military Attaché.*

No. 701

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received August 27, 12.15 p.m.)*

*No. 390 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 8831/1941/18]*

BERLIN, *August 27, 1938*

Prague telegram No. 469.<sup>1</sup>

Herr Hitler's position is of course equivocal in that he takes credit for leaving Herr Henlein free to negotiate with the Czechs at the same time allowing his party to instigate Sudeten to put forward far-reaching demands.

The crux of the matter is that Herr Hitler and Germany will not be satisfied with anything less than the grant of genuine autonomy to the Sudeten. One cannot bring Herr Hitler more into the open than that, and he has made his views very clear. If Czechs will agree to a settlement on these lines Herr Hitler would probably co-operate. Otherwise he will reserve the right to take action to secure for Sudeten the rights to which he claims they are entitled.

In my opinion it would serve no useful purpose to approach Herr Hitler on the subject until it is known on what basis Lord Runciman is attempting to achieve agreed settlement between the Sudeten and the Czechs. If we did so Herr Hitler would merely state his conditions, which increase with delay, thereby limiting Lord Runciman's freedom of negotiation.

Repeated to Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 694.

No. 702

*Mr. Troutbeck (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received August 28, 10.0 a.m.)*

*No. 478 Telegraphic [C 8841/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, *August 27, 1938, 10.5 p.m.*

My telegram No. 471.<sup>1</sup>

Following from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin for Mr. Strang:

Lord Runciman is not prepared to modify his view expressed in telegram under reference. He has authorized me to tell Herr Henlein that it has been in the mind of His Majesty's Government to send an eminent statesman to

<sup>1</sup> No. 695.

make a direct appeal to Herr Hitler before Parteitag . . .<sup>2</sup> to ask Herr Henlein's opinion regarding such an approach and whether he (Herr Henlein) would support it.

I hope to see Herr Henlein tomorrow Sunday.

Lord Runciman saw President Benes this afternoon August 27. He emphasized the extremely grave view of European situation taken by His Majesty's Government and the urgency of reaching an early agreement with Sudetens in such a form that it can be published during the coming week. M. Benes said that his negotiations were proceeding satisfactorily and that Dr. Kundt (though not as yet with full confirmation of his party) had accepted seven points proposed as meeting his requirements. He will see Dr. Kundt again on Tuesday and hopes soon after that to have a sufficient degree of agreement to permit publication. Manifesto signed by Herr Frank and Herr Kollner (my telegram No. 472<sup>3</sup>) is of course disquieting especially as an indication that a wing of the Sudeten Party may be trying to wreck negotiations—possibly on instructions from Berlin. But M. Benes is not unduly anxious.

Nor does he take too tragically warning given by Germany to Roumanian and Yugoslav Governments.

As regards his own supporters he has some difficulty in keeping them in order and he said for this purpose the presence of Lord Runciman and the threat of an appeal to him are invaluable cards in his hand.

He is well aware that war would in all probability mean the end of his country. Lord Runciman urged him in view of this fact to prepare himself and his Cabinet to go to the limit of concessions to Sudetens and even beyond.

<sup>2</sup> A word appears to be missing here.

<sup>3</sup> No. 697.

### No. 703

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 27)*

*No. 420 Saving: Telegraphic [C 8838/1941/18]*

BERLIN, August 27, 1938

My telegrams Nos. 378<sup>1</sup> and 388.<sup>2</sup>

Italian Ambassador came to see me today to express grave concern at a report, though possibly incorrect, from his colleague at Prague to effect that Czech Minister here when at Prague a fortnight ago had informed Ministry of Foreign Affairs that German Government did not want war and that even if they did they were not in a condition to make it.

This was, according to Signor Attolico (and my French colleague and I share his opinion), a very misleading picture of the position. He agreed that Herr Hitler did not want war and that Army regarded moment as inopportune but he was convinced that if no solution of Sudeten problem were

<sup>1</sup> No. 649.

<sup>2</sup> No. 662.

reached before October Germany would herself enforce one. Army might be more ready next year but it was already in a high stage of preparedness and would put up, if obliged to do so, a show which would surprise everybody.

Ambassador then proceeded to give following personal estimate of situation:—

Germany's ultimate object was annexation of Sudeten areas—and for this they [*sic*] would be prepared to fight when the moment came, if necessary—but she would be content with autonomy now provided it were achieved quickly and gratuitously (i.e. not as part of a bargain). If however the Czechs procrastinated Germany would automatically fall back on the first hypothesis.

If an effort was to be made to preserve peace it must be made before Nuremberg Party Congress at which Hitler would be obliged to define his policy. If plebiscite or Four-Power Conference were contemplated in event of Lord Runciman's failing to achieve an agreed solution, it would again be wiser to make alternative solution known in advance of such failure.

Benes was the prisoner of his past and he could not yield unless forced to do so without appearing as a failure to his people.

Autonomy was really a compromise and the only one which afforded chance of peaceable issue and the longer the delay the greater would be the danger.

Ambassador also mentioned that he had received report of a further conversation between Italian Chargé d'Affaires in London and Sir Orme Sargent. While welcoming the fact that the Italian Embassy should be kept informed of Czech negotiations, His Excellency observed that in view of psychology of Ciano it would be more useful if Italian co-operation were sought through His Majesty's Representative at Rome.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Sir O. Sargent, in a letter of September 5 to Sir N. Henderson, pointed out that His Majesty's Government had not been seeking Italian co-operation either in London or in Rome, and that any such attempt to do so would probably either meet with no response or be regarded as a move to weaken the Axis.

## No. 704

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 242 Telegraphic [C 8867/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, August 27, 1938, 6.0 p.m.

Speaking at Lanark this afternoon, the Chancellor of the Exchequer<sup>1</sup> made the following reference to foreign affairs:—

'I would define the general policy of His Majesty's Government in the realm of foreign affairs as a positive policy of peace. This has been a year of great anxiety and difficulty, and in nothing has Mr. Chamberlain's leadership been more marked than in the resolute and positive efforts he and Lord Halifax have made to reduce tension and to promote appease-

<sup>1</sup> Sir J. Simon.

ment. There are great countries in Europe which have a system of government very different from ours, which no one of us, brought up in the traditions of parliamentary democracy, will accept for ourselves, but that is no reason why we should conduct our foreign policy as though friendship was impossible with these States of widely different political systems. For my part, I repudiate altogether the outlook which is tempted to say that war is inevitable, as though certain countries were bound to be our enemies. I would rather proclaim the view that if all nations alike will do their utmost to remove causes that might lead to war and will try to meet in a fair spirit difficulties from whatever quarter they come, war is never inevitable. The influence of Britain is constantly thrown on the side of peace.

‘Our rearmament raises no distrust in other nations, because all the world knows that our arms will never be used for any aggressive purpose, and that Britain is making herself strong in order that she may herself be safe and may thus be a safe and effective friend of peace.

‘All the efforts of His Majesty’s Government have been directed to the strengthening of the foundations of peace and the adoption of argument and reason in the settlement of international differences. For we are convinced that true solutions cannot be found by the use of violent measures. Apart from the loss, suffering and death which accompany such measures, their adoption in any given instance may easily have repercussions which might, in certain circumstances, involve others besides the parties at first concerned. And once this process has begun, who can say where it will end?

‘The beginning of a conflict is like the beginning of a fire in a high wind. It may be limited at the start. But who can say how far it would spread or how much destruction it would do or how many may be called upon to beat it out?

‘It was a realisation of this that led to the adoption of the ideals and principles that form the basis of the League of Nations, and it has been a matter of profound regret to His Majesty’s Government that the absence of a number of important nations has so gravely weakened the League as to rob it of much of the value and influence which its founders hoped and believed it would have. If, however, as an instrument it has been found on occasion not to be capable of bearing the strain imposed upon it, this does not mean that we should abandon its principles; on the contrary, the ideal of the League—the substitution of reason and law for force—is a fine and inspiring one and we shall continue to work for its attainment.

‘I believe that just as the people of this country have a deep and abiding love of peace and a corresponding hatred of war, so have the peoples of all other nations. I believe that everywhere the man in the street, as we call him, desires to lead his life in an atmosphere of quietude and security, looking forward to the enjoyment for himself and his children of the good things of life, and hating and dreading the awful consequences which modern war brings upon all alike.

'It is disturbing to the minds of men and women in many countries in Europe to find that they are expected to prepare themselves against the perils and the horrors of aerial warfare. That very fact, however, may give us hope, for nowhere can a Government be so indifferent to the thoughts and opinions of its people as to ignore their feeling that these things ought to be avoided. Great, indeed, is the responsibility that would rest upon anyone who by his action brought upon humanity the evils that are known to accompany war.

'For our part, while there are interests and duties affecting us, our people and the people of the Empire, to protect and discharge which we would fight, we shall at all times bring the whole weight of our influence to bear with a view to the prevention of the outbreak of war in any part of the world, and we shall always be ready to make our contribution to the maintenance of peace.

'This, I think, fairly expresses the essence of British foreign policy as it is being pursued and conducted to-day by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary and the united British Cabinet, and in the carrying out of that policy we believe that we have the support of the British people and a large measure of sympathy from friendly nations abroad.

'In the particular case of Czechoslovakia—which is very much in our minds to-day—the position of Britain has been fully and accurately declared in Mr. Chamberlain's speech in Parliament on 24th March of this year. That declaration holds good to-day. There is nothing to add or to vary in its content.

'To find a solution for the controversy in Czechoslovakia, contributions from all concerned are needed. As a Government we have recognised in Czechoslovakia a real problem which urgently needs to be solved. And we are convinced that, given goodwill on all sides, it should be possible to find a solution which is just to all legitimate interests. And there is no need to emphasise the importance of finding a peaceful solution. For in the modern world there is no limit to the reactions of war. This very case of Czechoslovakia may be so critical for the future of Europe that it would be impossible to assume a limit to the disturbance that a conflict might involve, and everyone in every country who considers the consequences has to bear that in mind. You will have read the striking speech made the other day by Mr. Cordell Hull, the American Secretary of State, when he laid stress on the widespread reactions of war and on the necessity for substituting the method of friendly co-operation. What he said, and what President Roosevelt said a few days later in Canada, must waken a responsible [? responsive] echo in many British hearts.

'The British Government, therefore, have used their influence with both sides in the Czechoslovak dispute to urge the adoption of reasonableness in the efforts to reach a solution.

'We considered that it might be of assistance to them if there were placed at their disposal the services of somebody, who had had experience in statesmanship and in affairs, to act as an investigator and mediator.

This suggestion was welcomed by both parties and Lord Runciman agreed to serve. He is not an arbitrator nor a judge—he is a mediator and a friend.

‘The good wishes of all the world, which realises how much hangs upon his success, are with Lord Runciman in the task of mediation that, with such public spirit, he has undertaken. He is at Prague at this moment in no sense as the representative of the British Government but as the representative of all men everywhere who desire justice and who love peace. I am convinced that all reasonable persons in every nation must desire to assist rather than hamper him in his endeavours to bring the several elements of the Czechoslovak problem to a just settlement. Meanwhile, it is the duty not only of us but of all others—and all are concerned in world peace—to do nothing to imperil a satisfactory solution. And, as I have said, we firmly believe that if the right spirit prevails, a peaceful settlement which should reconcile legitimate interests and claims should, by dint of patience and goodwill, be attained.’

Repeated to Berlin, No. 329, and Paris, No. 248.

## CHAPTER VIII

German military measures: breakdown of negotiations between the Czechoslovak Government and the Sudeten Germans: Mr. Chamberlain's decision to visit Herr Hitler. (August 28–September 13, 1938.)

### No. 705

*Mr. Troutbeck (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 29)*  
*No. 424 Saving: Telegraphic [C 8848/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 28, 1938

My telegram No. 472.<sup>1</sup>

You will have seen from my telegram No. 478<sup>2</sup> that Dr. Benes does not take this manifesto too tragically. I had gathered the same impression from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of whom I had made an enquiry yesterday morning. I was informed that the Committee of Political Ministers would consider the manifesto on August 30. You will have seen too from my telegram No. 476<sup>3</sup> that the General Staff are apparently not being deterred from their intention to proceed to further arrests in the Sudeten area in connexion with the illegal possession of arms.

I hope shortly to glean further information from the Sudeten side as to the motive and significance of the manifesto, but in the meantime would offer the following preliminary comments:

(1) Herr Frank who signed the manifesto has long been suspected of being against any agreement. There would of course be an easier way of wrecking it than by inciting the population to create incidents under the guise of self-defence.

(2) You will have seen from Mr. Newton's despatch No. 295<sup>4</sup> that on August 16 Major Sutton-Pratt directly challenged Herr Frank himself as to what was meant by 'political manifestations' in the S.D.P. communiqué reported in Mr. Newton's telegram No. 433,<sup>5</sup> but drew a complete blank.

<sup>1</sup> No. 697.

<sup>2</sup> No. 702.

<sup>3</sup> Not printed. In this telegram Mr. Troutbeck reported that in the opinion of Colonel Hajek the manifesto appeared to be the sequel to the arrest of twenty-six Sudeten Germans in connexion with the importation of arms from Germany.

<sup>4</sup> Not printed. This despatch recorded an interview between Major Sutton-Pratt and Herr Frank in the sense indicated in the text.

<sup>5</sup> Not printed. This telegram reported a Sudeten Party communiqué of August 11. See above, No. 622, note 1.

(3) The simultaneous appearance of the manifesto and an apparently faked order by the Communist Party to prepare for illegal action seems unlikely to be fortuitous.

Repeated to Berlin.

No. 706

*Mr. Troutbeck (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 29, 1.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 479 Telegraphic [C 8872/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 29, 1938, 11.10 a.m.

My telegram No. 478.<sup>1</sup>

Following from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin for Mr. Strang.

On August 28 I saw first Frank then Henlein. Frank had just returned from Berlin where he had had two conversations with Herr Hitler on subjects which included suggestions I had made to Henlein at Marienbad on Monday August 22.

Frank said that Herr Hitler would welcome peaceful solution of Sudeten question if it comes quickly. Further Herr Hitler would welcome visit from Henlein provided Henlein can bring a definite statement of what His Majesty's Government propose, i.e. (a) if Lord Runciman really intends to help Henlein to find solution on basis of Karlsbad eight points and (b) as regards a general Anglo-German settlement if Henlein would bring list of subjects which His Majesty's Government would be prepared to discuss with Germany.

This was confirmed by Henlein who arrived later and who said that he would very gladly undertake this mission for the sake of world peace and because he believes Anglo-German friendship is real basis for world peace. A more peaceful attitude on the part of Germany would however weaken his own position with regard to Czechoslovak Government, who seeing the urgent danger receding might themselves again recede from their (? promises).<sup>2</sup> He must therefore ask that His Majesty's Government should themselves give him support by notifying Czechoslovak Government as follows: 'His Majesty's Government recommend that Czechoslovak Government should adopt the eight point programme of Herr Henlein's Karlsbad speech as general basis for solution of Sudeten question.'

Henlein subsequently postponed his engagements in order to repeat the above personally to Lord Runciman. Lord Runciman said that he must consult His Majesty's Government before he could comment on these suggestions. He also said that he would like to speak about them to Dr. Benes and Henlein concurred. Lord Runciman will if possible see Dr. Benes today in the circumstances. Meanwhile he would like to have your observations soon, if possible by Tuesday,<sup>3</sup> as Henlein is awaiting an answer and is ready to start at once for Berlin if required.

<sup>1</sup> No. 702.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>3</sup> i.e. August 30.



The Benes-Kundt conversations are continuing on Tuesday. It is clear that Sudeten leaders do not regard them so far as adequate in scope or sufficiently clear in their objective. I understand written proposals will be produced on Tuesday by Czechs but Sudetens are afraid of being presented with the similitude of a settlement and not the substance. Over and over again they emphasised the urgency for action and the difficulty of holding their people back. I mentioned to Henlein *en passant* possibility of sending some English statesman to Germany or of receiving some German statesman, e.g. Field-Marshal Göring, in England but this point was not pursued.

Mr. Newton has not yet seen this telegram.

Repeated to Berlin.

### No. 707

*Mr. Kirkpatrick<sup>1</sup> (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received August 29, 12.45 p.m.)

No. 395 Telegrammic: by telephone [C 8861/1941/18]

BERLIN, August 29, 1938

Herr Hess spoke on Sunday August 28 at the Congress of Germans Abroad at Stuttgart. This Congress is the recognised curtain-raiser for Nuremberg, and the speech, which was defiant and truculent in tone throughout, is not an agreeable augury for next week's proceedings.

Reviewing the past year, Herr Hess said that the German people had used it to develop its economic strength and to raise its security against enemy attack so far that it could contemplate with equanimity any eventuality which evilly disposed people might contrive against Germany. While it had been a happy and hardworking year at home, the Reich, with its strength renewed, had sealed closer friendships with other great nations.

Speaking of the achievements of the Third Reich and of the position which Germany had again won for herself in the world, he said: 'Certainly in many quarters of the world hate has grown as well, but with this hate there has risen also the respect which they are obliged to pay us however unwillingly. Respect has grown again and today, comrades, you can be prouder than ever of being Germans.'

The main body of the speech, which followed this passage, consisted of a bitter attack upon democratic ideals, particularly that of individual freedom, which Herr Hess contrasted with the status of a citizen of the Third Reich, greatly to the latter's advantage. He was particularly severe upon foreign critics of the régime. 'Reproaches and criticism, however much hatred there is behind them, leave us entirely cold. We do what we think right. We know from experience that such criticism springs from no wish to help us but is intended purely to harm us in the eyes of world opinion, no matter what the cost.'

<sup>1</sup> Sir N. Henderson had been recalled to London for consultation on August 28. (See No. 678.)

The speech concluded with following reference to the Sudeten German question, which is stated to have aroused enormous applause. 'The German people is looking at its German comrades in Czechoslovakia with the deepest sympathy for their sufferings. No one in the world who loves and is proud of his own people will take it amiss if we here turn our thoughts to the Sudeten Germans and if we tell them that we have seen with admiration how they have kept their iron discipline in the face of the worst treachery, chaos and murder. If any proof were necessary that the German virtues are present in Sudeten Germanism, then it is this iron discipline and unshakeable calm which springs from the feeling that right is on their side. You in Sudetenland know: we are with you with all our hearts. You have the right that belongs to three and a half million Germans, the right of millions of members of a great people, to live and organise their lives as membership of this great cultural race demands.'

No. 708

*Viscount Chilston (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received August 29, 8.30 p.m.)*

*No. 161 Telegraphic [C 8920/1941/18]*

MOSCOW, August 29, 1938, 7.15 p.m.

We understand from German Embassy that contrary to rumours published in the Press the Ambassador has made no formal *démarche* at Peoples' Commissariat of Foreign Affairs concerning Czech problem. Our information is that, following on his conversation with M. Litvinoff of August 21 reported in my letters to Mr. Collier of August 23<sup>1</sup> the Ambassador saw Commissar for Foreign Affairs on August 28, when in the course of conversation he again referred to question of Czechoslovakia and expressed view that hostilities between Germany and Soviet Union were unlikely, if only because neither Poland nor Roumania would allow the passage of German or Soviet troops across their territory. To this M. Litvinoff replied that he was not so sure about that, as at the moment Roumania seems 'much alarmed'.

<sup>1</sup> No. 673 and note 3 to No. 673.

No. 709

*Mr. Farquhar (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received August 30, 9.30 a.m.)*

*No. 191 Telegraphic [C 8941/1941/18]*

BUCHAREST, August 29, 1938, 9.15 p.m.

Your telegram No. 3<sup>1</sup> to Bled.

Minister for Foreign Affairs informed me this morning that German Minister made communication in question to him on August 14 and made

<sup>1</sup> No. 670.

it clear that he was carrying out circular instructions. After some conversation on other subjects German Minister reverted to the matter and then uttered warning as regards responsibility of French Government, holding language in the sense that if France intervened she would be responsible for starting a general conflagration. Minister for Foreign Affairs was left with impression that this latter warning was given more in the nature of a personal expression of opinion but he would not like to be quite sure about this.

His Excellency regarded communication as disquieting and not lightly to be dismissed.

Repeated to Paris, Berlin, Belgrade and Prague.

### No. 710

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 243 Telegraphic [C 8872/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, August 29, 1938, 10.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 479.<sup>1</sup>

2. Following for Lord Runciman.

3. I am surprised that in the record of Frank's conversation with Hitler no mention whatever is made of Benes' new proposals.<sup>2</sup> Is it possible that Frank did not inform Hitler of them or that he represented them as being valueless? In any case Hitler's proposal, as reported by Frank, seems to suggest that the Czechoslovak Government should abandon Benes' proposals and accept in their place the full Karlsbad programme. I am also surprised at the suggestion that Henlein should in any way speak on behalf of His Majesty's Government either as regards your mission or as regards the conditions for an Anglo-German settlement. I am sure you will agree that to allow Henlein to play this rôle would be quite unsuitable and might lead to all sorts of complications.

4. When Mr. Gwatkin spoke of sending Henlein to see Hitler I had understood that his 'mission' would be to assure Hitler that in view of the new proposals made by Benes he had renewed hopes of reaching an agreed settlement with the Czech Government, and that he would ask for Hitler's approval and support in proceeding with negotiations on this basis.

5. As regards Anglo-German relations, I had never contemplated using Henlein for anything more than what was suggested in Mr. Gwatkin's memorandum of August 23,<sup>3</sup> namely, that we were very ready for Henlein to tell Hitler that he believed Great Britain desired an Anglo-German agreement, and that he further believed that a settlement of the Czechoslovak question might well open the way for such an agreement. I should be glad for Henlein to say as much as this but I could not go beyond it. It would of course be out of the question for him to be the bearer of a list of subjects which His Majesty's Government would be prepared to discuss with Germany. That must, I think, be handled through official channels.

<sup>1</sup> No. 706.

<sup>2</sup> See No. 696.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix II.

6. Again there is no idea of His Majesty's Government sending an eminent statesman to make a direct appeal to Hitler at the present juncture, as suggested in Prague telegram No. 478,<sup>4</sup> and you should therefore correct any misapprehension there may be in the mind of Henlein on this point.

7. As regards the proposal that Henlein should assure Hitler that you intend to help Henlein to find a solution on a basis of the Karlsbad eight points, it is no doubt important to present any concessions made by the Czechoslovak Government in such a way as to cover the Karlsbad demands as far as possible, but I should have thought that you could hardly have given Hitler an undertaking in the form suggested with any confidence of its acceptance by Benes. Although this is a matter primarily for you to decide in the light of your negotiations, I should have supposed that the furthest you could go would have been to say that you propose to assist both parties to reach a settlement on the basis both of the Karlsbad eight points *and* of Benes' seven new proposals.

8. It would be impossible for His Majesty's Government to recommend to the Czechoslovak Government that they should adopt the Karlsbad programme as suggested by Henlein, because as you know His Majesty's Government are still, as they always have been, reluctant to pronounce upon the merits of any proposals which may be put forward by either side in the present negotiations. I should, however, be prepared to consider making direct representations to Benes to prevent him from receding from his own new proposals (although this would be secured by the action which is recommended in following paragraph).

9. What seems to us to be wanted urgently is a new procedure not involving messages to and from Hitler through partisan channels, by which the substance of the Czech proposals (hitherto formulated as seven points) should be made publicly known. Publication would show that Benes has made a great advance, whereas the fact that at present no one but those concerned in the conversations knows what the proposals amount to encourages the growth of suspicion and gives opportunities to those who are interested in preventing a settlement. Again, since you will not be explaining yourself to Hitler the present position of the negotiations, such publication seems to be the only safe way to enable Hitler to form a true estimate of the extent of Benes' recent concessions, and it is naturally very important that he should be alive to this new development before he goes to the Parteitag. Publication too would refute the German criticism that neither we nor Lord Runciman can secure a contribution from that side. It would impress the world that progress towards agreement was being made. And it would make intransigence on the part of Hitler more difficult, since the issue would be greatly narrowed.

10. For these reasons we consider that it is urgent and vital that early publication should be made by Benes of his offer in its most generous and extended form.

11. We hope you will be prepared to make immediate representations to

<sup>4</sup> No. 702.

Benes in this sense, but if while approving the idea you would prefer that the suggestion of publication should come from His Majesty's Government, I hereby authorise His Majesty's Minister to take it up at once with the President.

12. Lastly, it occurs to me that Benes would be well advised when publishing his proposals not to present them in tabulated and numbered form, which would lend itself to comparison with the eight points in the Karlsbad programme. Publication should take a more general and more discursive form but should stress in particular the main points where Benes has made his big concessions, such as territorial autonomy, officials and police.

Repeated to Berlin.

### No. 711

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 30, 9.20 a.m.)*  
*No. 483 Telegraphic [C 8918/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 29, 1938, 11.55 p.m.

My telegram No. 479.<sup>1</sup>

I have (? discussed)<sup>2</sup> matter with Lord Runciman who asks me to make it clear that he has not expressed any approval or in any way committed himself in regard to these proposals in their present form. Nor had Lord Runciman any reason to anticipate that Herr Frank would have acted as preliminary intermediary with Herr Hitler. The fact that he has done so and conditions which he claims to have brought back from Herr Hitler illustrate disadvantages and risks in use of any other than a British intermediary in matters affecting relations between Czechoslovakia, Germany and England.

On the other hand Lord Runciman sees nothing inherently impracticable in the acceptance as a general basis of eight Karlsbad points subject to their being defined on suitable lines and he might be willing to come out himself with same [*sic*, ? some] definition should direct negotiations now proceeding between the President and Party fail to achieve a settlement at a sufficiently early date—and moreover to express his readiness to do so in advance. The face of Czechoslovak Government ought of course to be saved in any way possible and for that purpose any scheme on the part of Lord Runciman would not necessarily be stated by him to be an embodiment of 'the eight points'. In any case it remains to be seen how far Czechoslovak Government can be persuaded to go. It is a great step that territorial autonomy has been accepted in principle but this acceptance remains to be defined and Sudeten Germans are understood to demand one continuous territory and not three separated areas. Acceptance of a 'Volksgruppe' is also likely to be a serious difficulty. If His Majesty's Government were willing to give advice to Czechoslovak Government in direct form desired by Herr Hitler I imagine they would have first to consult French Government and secondly that they would want some *quid pro quo* from Herr Hitler or to ask him what corresponding action he would be prepared to take.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 706.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 31)*

*No. 430 Saving: Telegraphic [C 8969/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 29, 1938

Speaking at Oberlütensdorf on Sunday, Henlein's deputy Herr Frank, said that the Sudeten Germans' final struggle had now commenced. They had borne for twenty years a lot which would not easily have been borne by another people. They had created a movement which must remain united in the coming weeks and must maintain faith and confidence. 'For there is only one thing', concluded Herr Frank, 'that we desire: our German future and the triumph of our German ideals.'

Repeated to Berlin.

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 31)*

*No. 428 Saving: Telegraphic [C 9007/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 29, 1938

My telegram No. 424 Saving.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin questioned Herr Frank about the manifesto on August 28<sup>2</sup> and found him somewhat shamefaced on the subject. Herr Kundt was definitely apologetic. Herr Frank said that it had been prepared after Brüx incident (see my telegram No. 460<sup>3</sup>) and given to the 'Rundschau' which only appears once a week. There was no other significance in the time of its publication and no grounds for suspicion that it was designed to wreck negotiations. Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin told both Herr Frank and Herr Henlein that it had appeared at an unfortunate moment.

Meanwhile the Sudeten German Press Bulletin contains a long article justifying the manifesto, by recalling the fact that a collection of six hundred and eighty-four incidents was communicated to M. Hodza, which brought out the disciplined behaviour of the Sudeten Germans. Exception is taken to the announcement that anyone who acts according to the manifesto will be severely dealt with by the State security services on the ground that this amounts to open support of the aggressor. It is also categorically denied that any encouragement is given to Sudeten German party members to resort to *illegal* measures, since the right of self-defence is universally recognised.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 705.

<sup>2</sup> See No. 697.

<sup>3</sup> Not printed. This telegram gave details of a clash between Czechs and Sudeten Germans at Brüx on August 16, and stated that Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin had gained the impression that 'the Sudeten Germans had failed to establish a serious case against the police and had considerably exaggerated the situation'.

*Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 31)*  
*No. 911 [C 8992/65/18]*

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, August 29, 1938

His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires at Berlin presents his compliments to H.M. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit to him the under-mentioned report from the Military Attaché.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 714

BERLIN, August 28, 1938

Hauptmann (E)<sup>1</sup> von Albedyl, who, as acting Chief of the Attaché-Gruppe, gave me my original official information regarding the scope of the military measures to be taken in Germany this Autumn, dined with me last night.

He told me that he was most anxious that I should realise that he was now in a position to confirm everything that he had previously said. The measures now being taken in the Army were for the greater part of a preliminary nature, and the collection and training of Reserve Formations would not begin properly until about September 7 as he had originally told me.

He again stressed that the Army was now being called upon to undertake much that the General Staff considered undesirable or unwise, but that it was obliged to do so, as unless the Army co-operated sufficiently with the Government, there was always the possibility that the control of the Army might be taken out of the Army's hands. (Wenn wir nicht genügend mitmachen, verlieren wir die Zügel aus den Händen.)

Von Albedyl was very anxious to know what impressions Sir Ian Hamilton had gained at Berchtesgaden.<sup>2</sup> I told him that Sir Ian and Herr Hitler had got on extremely well together and that Sir Ian had been most impressed by the peaceful atmosphere surrounding Herr Hitler in his mountain home. (Sir Ian said as much in a speech at a Kyffhäuser luncheon in Berlin.)

Von Albedyl gave renewed expression to his hopes that a satisfactory solution to the Sudeten question would be found in the immediate future, and said that he supposed that if matters came to an impasse owing to German obstruction, Britain would presumably attempt to apply sanctions against Germany, with the prospect in this case of being able to do so effectively as a result of the lessons learnt during the previous unsuccessful attempt to apply them against Italy.

I said that at the moment Great Britain had no desire to do anything in connection with the German-Czech question except to give such assistance as lay in her power towards finding a speedy solution which would prove satisfactory to all concerned.

Von Albedyl said that he presumed I was aware that there was considerable discontent and grumbling in the country. This was due to various

<sup>1</sup> i.e. 'Ergänzungsoffizier', a retired regular officer of the German army who had been recalled for a special period of service.

<sup>2</sup> See No. 589, note 1.

obvious causes, but there was one less obvious one which he himself welcomed. The people were beginning to realise that the Government intend to place their finances on a sounder basis. This can only mean increased taxation, and the people resent this. He, however, welcomed the prospect as indicating a definite desire on the part of the Government to take at least one step in the direction of 'normality'.

F. N. MASON-MACFARLANE  
*Colonel, Military Attaché.*

No. 715

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 2)*  
*No. 305 [C 9101/4786/18]*

PRAGUE, August 29, 1938

His Majesty's Minister at Prague presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and has the honour to transmit to him a copy of a despatch from the Military Attaché, dated the 29th August, respecting the military aspect of the possible granting of territorial autonomy to Sudeten Germans by Czechoslovak Government.

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 715

*Lieutenant-Colonel Stronge to Mr. Newton*

PRAGUE, August 29, 1938

Sir,

I have the honour to submit certain considerations on the subject of the military aspect of the granting of territorial autonomy to the Sudeten Germans by the Czechoslovak Government if such a course is decided upon as a result of the negotiations now in progress.

2. As you are aware, one of the main objections hitherto advanced by the Czechs to the giving of autonomy to the Sudetens has been that the military position would thereby be so weakened that in reality it would be but the first step towards an 'Anschluss' with Germany if the people of the areas in question should decide to bring that about. It would, in fact, be impossible to prevent a sudden entry of German forces into the country, who would occupy the Sudeten fringe and thereby confront the Czechs with a *fait accompli* before the army was in a position to intervene. I agree with this thesis in principle, but there are certain aspects of it which are perhaps not generally realised.

3. In the first place, on the north-west, west and south-west of Prague the fortifications lie for the most part on the Czech, or near side, of the Sudeten areas, so that even as matters stand to-day the first serious resistance to an invasion in these parts, that is to say, resistance by field armies based upon a permanently fortified line, would only take place after the Sudeten areas had been overrun. On the other hand, from the moment that German forces were to enter Czech territory they would encounter resistance of a minor but



useful kind, as the State Defence Guard ('Staatsverteidigungswache'), consisting of Finance Guards, gendarmerie and police, which is armed with rifles and some light machine guns, are bound to engage the enemy on the frontier proper. Moreover, it is their rôle to watch and patrol the frontier in time of danger. To this force also is largely assigned the important duty of demolition, the cratering of roads and blowing up of bridges, the preparations for which have been completed in peace. In addition to this initial resistance afforded by the State Defence Guard, there are certain units of the field army stationed in the area whose rôle in war would be to engage the enemy's advanced guards and fall back when obliged to do so on to the fortified lines in rear. If, therefore, autonomy were given to the Germans without any alteration in the military and para-military dispositions now in force, there should be little loss of security, but if the State Defence Guard is to disappear, or its personnel to be recruited from Germans, the security duties now performed by this body would have to be taken over by the army, involving the maintenance of larger garrisons in the area. Another factor is that facilities for sabotage would be greatly increased by the employment of German officials in key positions on the railways, roads and in the posts and telegraphs.

4. In other parts of the territory, that is to say, along the border north-east of Prague and down into Silesia, the granting of autonomy, even if it involved the replacement of Czech officials by Germans, would not weaken the military situation to quite the same degree, as the defences run much nearer the frontier and an effective resistance to invasion can be offered practically from the outset of hostilities. Here, however, the same increased danger from sabotage behind the lines has to be faced as in the Sudeten districts of Western Bohemia.

5. From the military point of view it is not only essential for the security of the State that adequate warning of an impending attack is received—it is the first duty of the Secret Intelligence Service to provide this—but it is important also that any form of infiltration by German para-military personnel, whether uniformed or not, should be checked at the outset. The same applies to the illicit arming of the population. Neither of these dangers could be effectively countered if German officials are entrusted with supervision of the frontier. I do think, however, that the replacement of a large proportion of the Czech State Police in the towns by Germans might be undertaken without grave risk provided the gendarmerie and Frontier Guards remained constituted as at present. It might also be possible to allow the Germans a reasonable quota of postal and railway officials. The integrity of the State would, however, definitely be imperilled in the present conditions of racial hostility if key posts on the General Staff or amongst minor Government officials are surrendered to the Sudeten Germans, unless as a counter this integrity is effectually guaranteed by Powers outside the republic.

6. I had occasion to express the opinion to you some time ago that the General Staff, whilst ready to agree to such measures of concession as the President of the Republic might deem necessary, would, nevertheless, clearly

insist that the integrity of the frontiers should not be placed in jeopardy. I am still of that opinion and believe that if now the generals should consent to the granting of autonomy to the Sudetens it will only be because they feel that new safeguards have been assured which will counteract the great military risk involved as outlined earlier in this despatch. I am under a strong impression from conversations I have had recently that the fact that the Government is now being pressed specifically to grant autonomy, with all its dangers, as opposed to being merely urged to go as far as possible 'within the integrity of the State' as heretofore, would be interpreted, if known, as imposing a strong moral obligation upon those who are exercising this pressure, an obligation which binds them to ensure that the country is not sacrificed as the result of following the proffered advice. Although such an assumption has not been put to me directly, I have little doubt that it would be held in military circles.

7. I will instance a type of remark which was made to me not long ago, but before any pressure had been exercised on the Czechs towards the granting of autonomy. I was sitting next to the Director of Artillery at luncheon and we had been discussing in general terms the scale of rearmament now being undertaken in most countries of the world. He turned to me and said, 'in the meantime, and before you are ready, you English possess a powerful weapon to a degree which no other country enjoys and that is your national prestige. That prestige is only partially based on your resources; it derives its real strength from your high moral standards in public life and policy. A single departure from those standards would mean moral suicide for you and disaster for the rest of the world.' Lest he should be inferring that Great Britain was already in some way compromised with the fate of his own country, I quickly retorted that precisely because we were as good as our word we were most careful not to get lightly committed, and as regards Central Europe, as he no doubt knew, our hands were entirely free. He replied that that, indeed, was the case at present and that any action we might decide to take if the occasion arose would be dictated by our own interests and not by reason of the *beaux yeux* of the Czechs. He then dealt at great length with the ultimate danger we should have to face if Czechoslovakia, the last centre of resistance to German domination, were to go under.

8. Whilst presenting the military dangers, as I see them, to the granting of autonomy to the Sudeten Germans, I have not presumed in this despatch to suggest that such a step should not be taken. On the contrary, my personal opinion, if I may be allowed to voice it, is that the granting of full autonomy is the minimum measure which will ensure the maintenance of peace and that that factor takes precedence of all others. What it has been my purpose to do is to draw attention to the dangers which the General Staff will be confronted with should autonomy, including the replacement of Czech officials by Germans, be given to the Sudetens, and to express my views on the feeling in General Staff circles regarding our British rôle and the obligations it imposes upon us. I do not think that the actions of a British mediator

can be divorced in the eyes of the Czechs from those of Britain, however much we insist on his independence.

I have, &c.,  
H. C. T. STRONGE  
*Lt.-Colonel, Military Attaché.*

No. 716

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 244 Telegraphic [C 8872/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *August 30, 1938, 12.10 p.m.*

My telegram No. 243.<sup>1</sup>

We should very much prefer that Lord Runciman rather than you put to Benes the proposal we have made about procedure. If, nevertheless, for reasons that seem good to him he should decide not to do so and it falls to you to see Benes, it is important that you should know and that if necessary you should make plain to him that what we are concerned with is simply procedure. What we feel is that whereas the Sudeten demands have been given full publicity there has up till now been nothing to indicate the extent to which the Czechoslovak Government are prepared to go to meet those demands. We think that it would strengthen Benes' position and serve to educate world opinion if the proposals which we understand are now under discussion were made known.

If necessary you must make it plain to Benes that our suggestions do not in any way amount to a pronouncement on the merits of the Czech proposals. As you know, we have been careful and must continue to be careful not to associate ourselves with proposals from either side.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 710.

No. 717

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 30, 6.40 p.m.)*  
*No. 485 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 8947/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, *August 30, 1938*

Your telegram No. 243.<sup>1</sup>

Following from Lord Runciman.

Paragraph 3, last sentence: I quite agree, see paragraph 1 of Prague telegram No. 483.<sup>2</sup>

M. Benes gave me yesterday (August 29) written memorandum (copy sent by bag)<sup>3</sup> which purports to amplify new proposals. Actually it seems to me to dilute them and to put the whole advance back into the realm of academic principles. I am very disappointed and fear that their publication in this

<sup>1</sup> No. 710.

<sup>2</sup> No. 711.

<sup>3</sup> It has not been possible to trace this paper in the Foreign Office archives.

form would do more harm than good. I suspend final judgment until I know reaction of Sudetens.

Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin will see Henlein tomorrow morning and will reply to his suggestions on lines authorised. It would, I am sure, greatly help to convince Henlein and also Hitler that we are sincere in our determination to promote a quick as well as a comprehensive settlement if Ashton-Gwatkin were to inform Henlein of my readiness to produce a scheme by some given date (say September 15) should the two parties have failed to reach an agreement on the present basis.

Please telephone tonight *en clair* to Hotel Alcron if you object.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> A message was sent to Lord Runciman that there was no objection to his proposal.

### No. 718

*Mr. Kirkpatrick (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 30, 6.50 p.m.)*

*No. 400 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 8945/1941/18]*

BERLIN, August 30, 1938

In official circles here basis of German complaint against British attitude is declared to be that whereas Sir J. Simon threatened Germany publicly, such pressure as is exercised on Czechoslovak Government is applied privately. The result is that public opinion in Czechoslovakia and elsewhere is led to believe that Great Britain considers Czechs in the right and Sudetens in the wrong, fundamental fact remains that beyond vague promises Czechs have done absolutely nothing so far to meet justified Sudeten demands for genuine autonomy. 'Börsen Zeitung' tonight remarks that British threats to Germany may postpone the evil day but will not solve the issue. Indignation is also expressed at Mr. Voigt's<sup>1</sup> talk on the wireless.

Repeated to Prague.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. F. A. Voigt was diplomatic correspondent of the 'Manchester Guardian'.

### No. 719

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 31, 9.30 a.m.)*

*No. 488 Telegraphic [C 8974/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 30, 1938, 7.44 p.m.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs has expressed to me his high appreciation of Sir John Simon's speech. At the same time, he was careful to make it clear that he did not wish to read too much into it and realised that His Majesty's Government retained their full freedom of decision. Dr. Krofta admitted that he had informed certain press representatives at a reception of the warning given by German diplomatic representatives in various capitals—see my telegram No. 421 Saving.<sup>1</sup> He had not intended this information

<sup>1</sup> Not printed.

to be published as having come from himself but thought it desirable that the gravity of the situation should be realised in Czechoslovakia.

No. 720

*Mr. Norton (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 31, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 62 Telegraphic [C 8995/1941/18]*

WARSAW, August 30, 1938, 7.57 p.m.

Your telegram No. 50.<sup>1</sup>

I communicated your message to M. Beck today.

2. M. Beck asked me to let you know that he fully realised the difficulty and delicacy of Lord Runciman's task. Everyone who had experience of war would earnestly hope for a friendly and peaceful solution of the problem. The Polish Government were of course deeply interested in their minority in Czechoslovakia. They expected that this minority should receive treatment equal to that of Sudeten Germans in any settlement. He agreed that he had received assurances from Prague in this sense. Poland was determined to maintain this formula, equally it would not seek to enlarge it. M. Beck did not think there was anything in this attitude that could hinder Lord Runciman's labours.

3. My reference to elements in Germany which might not desire a peaceful solution evoked no comment except that such things were always possible.

4. After some general conversation in which M. Beck gave me a full *résumé* of his talks with Mr. Duff Cooper<sup>2</sup> he said he would look forward to meeting Your Lordship at Geneva.

Repeated to Paris, Berlin and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram instructed Mr. Norton to express to M. Beck the hope that the Polish Government would co-operate in doing what they could to facilitate Lord Runciman's mission.

<sup>2</sup> First Lord of the Admiralty.

No. 721

*Mr. Campbell (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 31, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 220 Telegraphic [C 8975/65/18]*

PARIS, August 30, 1938, 8.45 p.m.

The Military Attaché called upon Lieutenant-Colonel Gauché, the Head of Second Bureau, this afternoon. He found him in a very serious mood. Without any of the usual preliminaries, he said 'We are now convinced beyond any possible doubt that the German army is in process of mobilisation. Two reserve divisions (one at Kassel and one in neighbourhood of Berlin) have definitely been identified, and we have reason to believe that five more have been mobilized, making seven in all. We are also of opinion that others will be formed later. Further a large number of civilian buses

and lorries have been requisitioned and formed into reserve parks, ready to transport troops at a moment's notice.

'All men who have been withdrawn from factories etc. have been replaced by women.

'There is no question of any manœuvres, the training which is being carried out is in the nature of (? speci)al' training designed to make men fit for immediate service in the field.

'To sum up, everyone recognised that German active army is mobilized with all its transport and necessary number of reservists, that at least seven reserve divisions are in approximately the same state of preparedness, and that others are in course of mobilization.

'From the military point of view, Germany is ready for immediate war against Czechoslovakia with a *couverture* on western front and it rests entirely with political side if it is to be averted. The German Government is still under the impression that neither France nor Great Britain will fight to save Czechoslovakia. Herr Hitler's activities during the last few days had been those of a Commander-in-Chief. He had inspected numerous units as well as defences in the west.'

In reply to a question from the Military Attaché, Gauché stated that in his opinion Italy would go in with Germany. The attitude of Italy in regard to France had deteriorated to a very serious extent during the past fourteen days, and closing of the Italian frontier had had for its object preservation of Italian morale by denying to individual Italians any contact with the French point of view. Signor Mussolini had been forced to concur in the 'Anschluss' and he was now out to score a success in international field by at the least passive co-operation with any action Germany might see fit to take in Czechoslovakia. No measures pointing to mobilization had been taken in Italy, but they were in process of blocking all valleys leading into France, a measure which had led to expropriation of French farmers living across the border, recently reported in the Press.

Gauché finished by saying that he had explained the situation with complete frankness as seen by the French General Staff and he believed the French Government . . .<sup>1</sup> his appreciation of the situation. I might add that Gauché has always been known to us as a very unexcitable type of Frenchman, in normal circumstances unusually taciturn, and that on this occasion he was obviously most deeply moved.

Please inform the War Office.

Not repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.

*Mr. Campbell (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 31, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 223 Telegraphic [C 8954/4786/18]*

PARIS, August 30, 1938, 9.10 p.m.

My telegram No. 525 Saving.<sup>1</sup>

The Political Director tells me that the Czechoslovak Government were not convinced by arguments of the French Government against introduction of three years' law. They had therefore sent a General to discuss the matter here with General Gamelin, who repeated advice against any action which might appear provocative. So far General Gamelin has not succeeded in bringing Czech General to his way of thinking, Czechs still fearing that any measure less than three years' law would fall short of essential defence requirements.

<sup>1</sup> No. 656.

## No. 723

*Letter from Viscount Runciman to Viscount Halifax*  
*[C 9278/1941/18]*

LORD RUNCIMAN'S MISSION, PRAGUE, August 30, 1938

The moves here and in and around this accursed country concern Berlin now as well as Czechoslovakia, and it is still uncertain how far we can rely on a peace sentiment there. The meagre signs coming to me from several quarters are not as hopeless as they were and it was even on the cards that an invitation to go to Berlin would probably come to me. This is of course quite different from the proposal to ask H. to invite me. Anyhow that has not emerged from the confusion now mixing up this atmosphere. The position is most difficult. Benes has made his contribution in a long nine page memorandum covered with bolt holes and qualifications—no use for publication. What I want is a well condensed quarto page of the Sudeten D.P. Carlsbad points amalgamated with the seven points to which B. has already agreed. This would be of service in telling the world what it is all about. What we need at present is a little flexibility and some one with the mentality of an Advertising Agent!

The signs of bad government accumulate day by day and at any moment H. may find an excuse for crossing the frontier in order to maintain order. We are doing everything we can to steer clear of these rocks and if only we could bring B. to realise how near he is to a cataclysm we could now make some progress—but he is too clever. Time is passing rapidly and we are working against a dead end not much more than a week from today.

If all were going well I could count on Henlein going straight for his own short programme combined with a peace move by H. and on the Czechs using their functions to put through the agreed reforms. The Mission's end

would then be in sight and a tranquil future assured for at least a few months. The terrors of war and devastation are weighing on everyone's mind—and yet Europe continues to drift dangerously. I cannot speed up the proceedings to greater pace, and I run some risk of wearing out our little staff. They are at work night and day and during meal times as well. Their spirits are good and they are popular but none of us can keep up this strain much longer—and I have no stop gaps. I must confess to being rather worn myself!

I fear that you also must be feeling the tension—none the less because of the distance separating Central Europe from home.

Yours ever,

W. R.

I have not been able to take a day off for their wonderful partridge shooting, alas.

No. 724

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 245 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 8947/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, August 31, 1938, 12.45 p.m.

Your telegram No. 485.<sup>1</sup>

Following for Lord Runciman:

If as your telegram seems to suggest Benes is playing fast and loose, is it not a case for taking drastic action? His present behaviour will do incalculable harm, and the time at our disposal is too short to permit of these new tergiversations. I would suggest therefore that you should tell him that in the interests of European peace you consider it essential that full substance of the seven proposals as he put them forward last week should be published *at once* as the definite and unalterable basis of all future negotiations and that if he will not publish them as his own unforced offer you will publish them forthwith as your own recommendation and communicate them to both parties as the basis on which you propose henceforth to conduct your mediation. If he objects you will know best how to exert pressure on him and in doing so, you can count on fullest support of His Majesty's Government.

In addition His Majesty's Minister is hereby authorised if you desire it to make urgent representations to M. Benes in the name of His Majesty's Government not to recede from his original proposals. (This would be in accordance with Paragraph 8 of my telegram No. 243.)<sup>2</sup>

I presume that you will meanwhile have told Henlein that you will be ready to publish a scheme of your own by September 15. This by itself however will to my mind not meet urgent necessity of case in view of the imminence of the Parteitag, and once you have decided to sponsor a scheme I feel strongly that you had better do so as soon as you reasonably can. But the first most urgent and essential step would seem to be to establish once and for all and publish the basis of further negotiations, on which as rapidly

<sup>1</sup> No. 717.

<sup>2</sup> No. 710.



as possible a detailed scheme could be agreed, or failing agreement, suggested by yourself. As you know, I have always felt some misgiving at prospect of your coming out yourself with proposals—but I have no doubt that such objections are definitely less than the dangers of allowing present suspicions to grow—and poison the atmosphere both in Czechoslovakia and in Germany.

Repeated to Berlin.

No. 725

*Mr. Campbell (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 31, 3.25 p.m.)*  
*No. 225 Telegraphic [C 8997/1941/18]*

PARIS, August 31, 1938, 1.25 p.m.

Speaking to me of general situation this morning Minister for Foreign Affairs said he thought it now rested very much with His Majesty's Government whether a friendly settlement was reached or not. If His Majesty's Government were, on the receipt of Lord Runciman's opinion, to offer to arbitrate on Sudeten question, the French Government would support arbitral solution proposed by His Majesty's Government, whatever it was, whether pleasing to the Czech Government or not. France would honour her engagements but if what His Majesty's Government considered a fair solution was (? refused<sup>1</sup> by Czechs that was their look out, *tant pis pour eux*. He felt convinced German Government would not refuse to accept a fair British proposal nor proceed to extreme measures if it did not give the Sudetens all they desired. He thought this was the only way to make sure of a peaceful outcome of present situation.

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.

No. 726

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Campbell (Paris)*  
*No. 251 Telegraphic [C 8947/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, August 31, 1938, 5.0 p.m.

Prague telegram No. 485.<sup>1</sup>

It would be deplorable if Dr. Benes were now to go back on his seven proposals set out in my telegram No. 88 Saving<sup>2</sup> to Berlin, and I consider it essential that all possible pressure should be put upon him not to recede from those proposals as the basis for future negotiations.

I have accordingly authorised His Majesty's Minister in Prague in my telegram No. 245<sup>3</sup> to make urgent representations to Dr. Benes in this sense if Lord Runciman desires it. You should see M. Bonnet as soon as possible and urge him to instruct the French Minister immediately to concert with Mr. Newton and to support him in any action he may take.

<sup>1</sup> No. 717.

<sup>2</sup> No. 696.

<sup>3</sup> No. 724.

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)**No. 247 Telegraphic [C 8947/1941/18]*FOREIGN OFFICE, *August 31, 1938, 7.40 p.m.*

The German military preparations and information which is reaching me from various sources about the intentions of the German Government make it essential that the Czechoslovak Government should agree with the Sudeten Germans without further delay on the basis of a comprehensive settlement. This may be the best way of restraining Hitler from committing himself to extreme action, either at the Nuremberg Congress or shortly afterwards.

2. It is evident that the German Government, while ready to give Lord Runciman's mission a chance, are not prepared to stand aside and wait much longer for the present negotiations to produce a satisfactory solution of the Czechoslovak question. Moreover the internal position in Germany is such that it may become of vital importance for the régime to win a diplomatic success by securing the satisfactory settlement of the Sudeten question before the approach of winter renders difficult an appeal to force. I have in fact received numerous indications that the German Government are determined to find a settlement of the Czechoslovak question this autumn—by force if necessary.

3. It seems certain that Hitler will have to speak about Czechoslovakia at the Nuremberg Congress. If no progress is made by then, after five months of negotiation, he will be able on the ground of delay alone to make out a case which cannot fail to make an appeal to a good deal of public opinion. I am advised by Sir N. Henderson that, failing some outward and visible sign of progress before the Congress, Hitler may feel obliged to make some unpleasant pronouncement. This might, it seems to me, possibly take the form of a demand for territorial autonomy in its widest sense, based on the claim of the Sudeten Germans for the right of self-determination. Or alternatively Hitler might take the line of demanding a plebiscite on behalf of the Sudeten Germans. In either case the German demand would presumably be accompanied by appeals to the right of self-determination which would appear plausible, and the general effect of which might well be to discount the appeal to force by which it would be covered.

4. In these circumstances I feel that the time has come to impress these unpleasant but unavoidable facts upon M. Benes' attention, and to warn him with all the earnestness at your command that in the opinion of His Majesty's Government his Government must, in the interests of their country, clear themselves without delay of the suspicions which are widely prevalent, to the effect that, counting on foreign support, they are merely manœuvring for position and spinning out the negotiations without any sincere intention of facing the immediate and vital issue. The only way by which the Czechoslovak Government can remove these suspicions is by offering immediately, publicly, and without reservation, those concessions without which the

Sudeten question cannot be solved by peaceful process. I am not in a position to say whether anything less will now suffice than the full Karlsbad programme. But at all events M. Benes' offer must clearly in my opinion not in any way recede from the seven definite proposals formulated by M. Benes himself last week and communicated to me by Mr. Gwatkin when he came to London.

5. Before making these representations you should consult Lord Runciman and ascertain whether he sees any objection to this course or whether he has any modifications to suggest in regard to the language which I am authorising you to use. Meanwhile I am asking the French Government to instruct immediately their representative in Prague to concert with you in any representations to M. Benes.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

No. 728

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received August 31, 8.0 p.m.)*  
*Unnumbered. Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9095/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, August 31, 1938

Following from Lord Runciman for Secretary of State.

*Personal.*

Publication of seven points at present time would be disastrous.

No. 729

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Campbell (Paris)*  
*No. 1972 [C 9017/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, August 31, 1938

Sir,

The French Ambassador asked to see me this morning on his return from Paris, where he had had the opportunity of full consultation with M. Bonnet. He was accordingly in a position to make me acquainted in some detail with the recent discussions and thought of the French Government.

2. His Excellency began by saying that the French Government had warmly approved the speech made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer at Lanark and the general tone of the British press. They thought that the general effect would be that of a useful warning to the German Government. At the same time, we had to face the situation suggested by the recent German communication to the Little Entente Governments and, therefore, the French Government felt it necessary to continue to hold strong language and to act up to their language should the situation require.

3. If there were incidents in Czechoslovakia, due either to open intervention by Germany or to events occurring with the support of the German Reich, it was in the view of the French Government an illusion to believe that the conflict could be limited.

4. They had reviewed the attitude of the Italian Government. At the time of the 'Anschluss' Italy had received no compensation from Germany, and since then the Italian press had been violently anti-French and the Italian Government had gratuitously made the passport difficulty between the two countries. This seemed a very significant change of Italian attitude from three months ago when the Franco-Italian Agreement was on the *tapis* and gave food for thought. The French Government felt that the Italians would not attack North Africa unless and until France was engaged elsewhere over Czechoslovakia, when no doubt the Italians would aggravate their interference in Spain, creating further embarrassment both for the French Government and for ourselves.

5. If, on the other hand, Czechoslovakia could be solved, Signor Mussolini would not act on any of these lines, and accordingly Czechoslovakia was the key. This being so, the French Government had decided for the present to keep the Pyrenean frontier closed.

6. In the view of the French Government, Lord Runciman's mission had been most useful. Even if he had doubts as to the issue, it was necessary for him to go to the end of his endeavour, and the French Government had no doubt that the Czechoslovak Government would follow his advice. The real difficulty was not at Prague; it was at Berlin that we must try to exercise any influence we could. The conclusions of the French Government accordingly were—

- (1) They had decided to take some precautionary military measures, to which reference was made in your telegram No. 222<sup>1</sup> of the 30th August.
- (2) They were quite ready to act in Berlin either on their own or in conjunction with us in any way that we might think useful. They did not, however, think that there was much more that they could do at the moment, although we must both bear in mind that it was very important to leave the partisans of the extreme course in no doubt of the possibility of British action, and they were apt very quickly to forget speeches and warnings.
- (3) The French Government thought we might possibly strengthen the attitude of Bucharest, Belgrade and Warsaw if we took occasion to emphasise to them how gravely we viewed the situation and what might be in certain circumstances the action of the United Kingdom.

7. M. Corbin concluded by saying that the key lay with Lord Runciman's Mission and the French Government hoped that his conclusions would be published and that on them a settlement could be built. It was, they felt, the only hope, but they also felt that it was very important that our will to peace should not be interpreted as weakness. He finally observed that naturally

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. In this telegram Mr. Campbell reported the intention of the French Government to take some precautionary military measures. Mr. Campbell stated that it would be made clear to the Germans that the measures had a direct connexion with the German mobilization and would be rescinded if they met with a corresponding relaxation on the German side.

the French Government would not take any advantage, by way of trying to extend our commitments of the 24th March, of any strong statement on our side.

8. In reply, I thanked the French Ambassador for his very full communication and told him that we were disposed to doubt whether any useful purpose would be served at this moment by a repetition of the Lanark warning, but we would certainly have the possibility of saying something further in mind and would watch events closely. I had, as a matter of fact, instructed the Ambassador, when returning to-day, not indeed to seek a formal interview with the Foreign Minister, but to take such opportunities as he had of speaking very forcibly for himself and as a result of his own personal observations of what he had felt to be English feeling during the days he had been in England. On the other side the important thing seemed to us that Dr. Benes should be pressed to publish without delay the best offer that he could be induced to make. This was also, I gathered, Lord Runciman's view, and I hoped that we should succeed in getting this done with beneficial result in Berlin.

9. The Ambassador fully appreciated that we could not in any way alter our 24th March position. I said that we were fully prepared in whatever way we could to make the most of that position, but we should merely defeat our own object if we tried to go beyond it.

10. The Ambassador said that his Government fully understood this, as they also fully appreciated the possible consequences to ourselves if they were drawn into war. It was for this reason that they told us at once what they had in mind about their military measures and would, no doubt, continue to act in the closest consultation with us.

11. Finally, as he was leaving, his Excellency observed that Lord Runciman was clearly in the best position to judge of possibilities at Prague, but, if at any time he felt, or we felt, that pressure was required on Dr. Benes, the French might, and he had no doubt would, be very willing to help.

I am, &c.,

HALIFAX

### No. 730

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 1, 12.45 a.m.)*

*No. 493 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9047/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 1, 1938

Following from Lord Runciman.

I fear assumptions on which your telegram No. 245<sup>1</sup> were based are already somewhat out of date. M. Benes' seven points were, it is true, accepted by Henlein party last week (see my telegram No. 478)<sup>2</sup> but they were from the first regarded on Sudeten side as little more than a bridge by which to re-start negotiations. To that extent they served their purpose.

<sup>1</sup> No. 724.

<sup>2</sup> No. 702.

When it became apparent to M. Benes that his proposals were regarded in this spirit and that Sudetens were reverting to their Karlsbad demands, he too began to hang back. No doubt, too, he was subjected to heavy pressure by the more extreme members of the Government.

Result was the production of his written memorandum which was discussed by him and Kundt yesterday. I saw Kundt today, who said that memorandum, like the seven points, did not cover all Sudeten requirements and moreover did not go far enough in points which it did treat.

He is to see M. Benes again on Friday after consulting his colleagues, but it is already clear that publication either by M. Benes or by myself of the seven points as a 'definite and unalterable basis of all future negotiations' would have an evil effect on Sudetens and of course on Herr Hitler. Nor have I any confidence that meeting on Friday is likely to produce agreement although I understand Kundt will then come forward with some counter-proposals.

I will see M. Benes today and urge him to go to the utmost limits to meet Sudeten proposals adding that his latest memorandum has made a bad impression on me as well as on Kundt and also my conviction that British public opinion would take the same view if the memorandum were published. I shall add that unless result of his conversation with Kundt on Friday satisfies me that real and rapid progress is being made I shall have no alternative but to produce a scheme of my own as a last chance of preserving peace.

I do not entirely understand your desire for some immediate publication. While it is possible that Sudetens might purposely refrain from informing Herr Hitler of M. Benes' proposal I cannot believe they would withhold from him any proposal of my own or any proposal which they themselves were prepared to accept. Nor is Herr Hitler likely to urge them to accept any proposal which they themselves did not view with favour.

On the other hand I see definite disadvantages in my publishing, as opposed to producing, a scheme of my own. It would mean nailing my colours (and of course in the eyes of the world the colours of His Majesty's Government) to the mast and leave me little opportunity for further mediation.

### No. 731

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 1, 4.0 p.m.)  
No. 494 Telegraphic [C 9069/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 1, 1938, 1.46 p.m.

My telegram No. 479.<sup>1</sup>

Following from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin for Mr. Strang.

I spoke as instructed to Herr Henlein yesterday. He declared himself ready to convey our two messages (texts in immediately following telegram) to Herr Hitler. He was very anxious to go, ready to start that same evening

<sup>1</sup> No. 706.

although suffering from an evident chill; but I said that today (September 1) would do. But he emphasized—even with a written note on the point—that he was going at our request and for the purpose of this message *only*. He asked—also in writing—that Lord Runciman would provide that no ill consequences come to him from Czechs' side.

Lord Runciman will explain the reasons to M. Benes today. He will say that Henlein is going at his request because Lord Runciman believes in Herr Henlein's genuine desire for peace and he hopes that Herr Henlein's attitude may influence Herr Hitler and in order to convey a message to the effect that Lord Runciman trusts Herr Hitler will give approval and support to continuance of present negotiations and that settlement of Sudeten question may lead on to settlement of questions now outstanding between Great Britain and Germany.

M. Benes will be asked to influence the press to explain the visit as above and not to distort its significance.<sup>2</sup> News Department should take similar line (provided that fact that Henlein has gone is known); and it would be as well to inform French Government if only for this purpose.

Herr Henlein complains that he is getting a bad press in Great Britain and in America; and untrue reports of his hostile attitude such as appeared in the 'Daily Telegraph' on August 30 can do infinite harm. He is courteous, friendly and (I believe) honest, and he may be willing and able to do us great service.

I am well aware that these dealings with Herr Henlein are leading us gradually on towards the obligation to support full meaning (as Henlein sees it) of Karlsbad eight points but I believe this is inevitable since (1) the eight point programme is not in itself unreasonable and (2) it is probably the only way to peace. But Czechs may very likely say that we have sold them for the *beaux yeux* of Herr Hitler.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>2</sup> At 7.50 p.m. on September 1 Mr. Newton was instructed that M. Benes should not mention that Herr Henlein was carrying a message regarding Anglo-German relations.

#### No. 732

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 1, 4.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 495 Telegraphic [C 9070/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 1, 1938, 1.5 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.

Following are texts (translated from German) of two messages:

(First message.)

The object of Lord Runciman's mission is to assist both parties to reach a settlement on the basis both of Karlsbad eight points and of new proposals of Czechoslovakian Government. As regards Herr Henlein's suggestion that His Majesty's Government might intervene, their position is that they are reluctant to pronounce on the merits of any proposals that may be put

forward by either side. Both Lord Runciman and His Majesty's Government are however very anxious that a settlement should be found at the earliest possible moment; and Lord Runciman is making every effort to this end. Lord Runciman would be glad if Herr Henlein could convey this message to Herr Hitler and he hopes Herr Hitler will give approval and support to the continuance of negotiations.

(Very confidential).

In order to convince Herr Henlein and Herr Hitler that Lord Runciman and also His Majesty's Government are sincere in their determination to promote a quick as well as a comprehensive settlement Lord Runciman desires to inform Herr Henlein very confidentially of his readiness to produce a scheme by some given date (say September 15) should the two parties have failed to reach an agreement on present basis.

(Second message begins.)

As regards general question of Anglo-Czech [*sic*]<sup>1</sup> relations Lord Runciman would be glad if Herr Henlein would tell Herr Hitler that he (Herr Henlein) believes Great Britain desires an Anglo-German agreement and that he further believes that a settlement of the Sudeten question might well open the way to such an agreement. Lord Runciman is not in a position to give any list of subjects which His Majesty's Government would be prepared to discuss; the actual initiation and programme of such discussions would presumably have to be arranged between the two Governments through their own channels.

Repeated to Berlin.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Apparently an error for 'Anglo-German'.

<sup>2</sup> At 7.30 p.m. on September 1 Mr. Campbell was instructed to inform the French Government of the reasons for Herr Henlein's visit to Herr Hitler.

### No. 733

*Mr. Campbell (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 1, 2.45 p.m.)*

*No. 227 Telegraphic [C 9064/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 1, 1938, 1.15 p.m.

Your telegram No. 251.<sup>1</sup>

I saw Minister for Foreign Affairs at 11.30 p.m. on August 31 and after telling him of M. Benes' seven proposals (your telegram No. 88 Saving<sup>2</sup> paragraph 6) and of the fears felt by Lord Runciman concerning the effect of the memorandum given him by M. Benes on August 29 (Prague telegram No. 485<sup>3</sup> paragraph 2) I urged him to instruct French Minister at Prague immediately in the sense desired by you. M. Bonnet promised to telephone to the French Minister early on the morning of September 1 to concert at once with His Majesty's Minister. He would follow this message up by

<sup>1</sup> No. 726.

<sup>2</sup> The reference is to Berlin telegram No. 88 Saving, No. 696.

<sup>3</sup> No. 717.



telegram giving the position as stated by me more fully. He strongly agreed with you on the necessity for pressure on M. Benes on this point at this juncture.

Repeated to Prague and Berlin.

No. 734

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 1, 3.10 p.m.)*  
*No. 496 Telegraphic [C 9071/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 1, 1938, 1.50 p.m.

My telegram No. 494.<sup>1</sup>

Following from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin for Mr. Strang.

Henlein is dramatically conscious of the weight upon him personally of responsibility for peace or war. He is I am sure convinced that friendship between England and Germany is the only true basis for world peace. He cannot see what essential questions there are to separate us. He is simple and honest and may succeed with Hitler where the more crafty would fail.

He has not, he told me, seen Hitler many times in his life. He admitted indirectly that Hitler is difficult as a conversationalist. Although immensely impressed by the achievements of Nazi Germany and convinced that owing to change of spirit Germany 'can never be beaten to her knees again', Henlein is anxious to dissociate his movement from identification with the Reich Nazis and he repudiates absolutely the spirit of persecution.

He will probably go to 'Parteitag' this year (he did not go in the first instance) because he thinks himself a moderating influence.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 731.

No. 735

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 249 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9066/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 1, 1938, 2.0 p.m.

Following for Lord Runciman:

1. We recognise situation is changing from day to day and you are in much better position than we to judge of what action at your end can best be taken at any stage. But I think following is worth passing on to you.

2. We have heard today from a source in close contact with Sudeten leaders that the more moderate elements among the Sudeten Deutsch, and Dr. Kundt in particular, would like to negotiate seriously on the basis of the present Czech offer. They do not feel, however, that the offer is sufficiently 'concretised' to justify them in placing too much reliance on it; moreover, the attitude of Dr. Benes himself inspires them with the greatest mistrust. They are afraid, in their own words, of 'being led into a trap and made to look ridiculous'. I have reason to believe, however, that if you were to send for

Dr. Kundt immediately and give him every encouragement to proceed with negotiations, and to tell him that in your opinion he could safely proceed without the risk of looking foolish later, you would give considerable heart to the moderate section and improve the prospect of agreement. It would be desirable, however, according to my informant, to act today.

3. Such action must of course depend upon your feeling able to give such assurance with confidence—and this in turn depends upon Benes. It seems to us, as also from your letter of August 30<sup>1</sup> it appears to do to you, quite vital that no means of strongest possible pressure on Benes should be neglected to make him do immediately what you consider necessary. I have already assured you of fullest support of His Majesty's Government in this sense.

4. I have just received your telegram 493<sup>2</sup> on which if necessary I will comment later but it does not seem to affect above suggestion.

<sup>1</sup> No. 723.

<sup>2</sup> No. 730.

### No. 736

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 1, 2.50 p.m.)*  
*No. 403 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9067/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 1, 1938

Prague telegram No. 89.<sup>1</sup>

I had a long and earnest talk with State Secretary after dinner last night at the Embassy. I told him that I was glad of this social opportunity of speaking to him as I preferred not to attract (? attention)<sup>2</sup> immediately on my return (? by visit to)<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs to see him or Herr von Ribbentrop lest such an official visit should be misinterpreted in press. I had not come back with instructions to issue another warning to German Government. His Majesty's Government had no inclination to make idle threats and sincerely hoped that occasion would never come for threats which would not be idle. At same time I must tell him that I had noted in England with amazement and regret the growing strength and unanimity of feeling in regard to Germany. I was struck by the difference even in two months since I was last in London and it was not confined to one but to all classes and to all parties, and I had seen many people.

Neither His Majesty's Government nor the nation had any illusions as regards M. Benes or the reality and seriousness of the Czechoslovak problem. Nor I gather had Lord Runciman himself who was a hard-headed and shrewd business man, who was no man's fool and who was the last man to be influenced by anybody against his own judgment. Nobody in England wished to fight for either Czechs or Sudetens, but if Germany took precipitate action that would cease to be the issue, particularly if France felt circumstances to be such as to compel her to honour her (? obligations).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This reference is uncertain, possibly in error for Prague telegram No. 489 of August 30 (not printed), in which Mr. Newton drew attention to the increasingly ominous tone of news bulletins broadcast from Breslau about Czechoslovakia.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

Here Baron von Weizsäcker interpolated that France would not fight if she could not count upon British support and that we could therefore stop her if we wished. To which I replied it seemed to me inconceivable that any British Government should advise France to act in a sense that was contrary to her honour—that was the crucial point and that was why it was so essential that German Government should not miss the opportunity and oppose a reasonable and fair offer if it were made to Sudetens. M. Benes' position was a difficult one but he was now definitely considering really big concessions.

State Secretary again interpolated to say that he had latest information from German Minister in Prague as to the extent of these alleged concessions and that in effect they amounted to something which meant very little and was mostly eyewash (see Prague telegram No. 485),<sup>3</sup> to which I replied that we must wait and see what they really were and that I hoped that next few days would prove whether he or I were right.

I then referred to the German naval manœuvres<sup>4</sup> and to *démarche* made by German Minister to Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Yugoslav Minister for Foreign Affairs. State Secretary endeavoured to make light of both, representing former as normal naval exercises and latter as the kind of attitude which German representatives were bound to take if they said anything at all. I warned him that though Germany might regard these things in that light she must not fail to appreciate how they would be regarded abroad, particularly in this period of high tension in Europe. The naval exercises would be regarded by British public as aggravating provocation, already serious enough, constituted by extensive German military manœuvres and I was surprised that French and Czechoslovak Governments had so far kept such cool heads and had not reacted more vigorously to the latter.

State Secretary then asked me whether I wished to see his Minister. Latter had retired once more to his country place and if I saw him there it would arouse less comment. I replied that I was perfectly ready to do so, though I had no more to say than I was now saying. He could tell Herr von Ribbentrop so. Whereupon Baron von Weizsäcker observed that it would be impossible to convince the latter that England would ever move under any circumstances. I replied that if this was so he was making a very very great mistake.

Repeated to Paris.

<sup>3</sup> No. 717.

<sup>4</sup> On August 29 H.M. Naval Attaché at Berlin received a written communication from the German Admiralty to the effect that the German autumn naval manœuvres would take place in the North Sea in September, according to plan, and that these manœuvres would have the object 'not only of training the personnel on a large scale, but also of practising co-operation with the German merchant navy. Some units of the German merchant navy would therefore be included in the manœuvres.'

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) and Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 339<sup>1</sup> Telegraphic [C 9076/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 1, 1938, 4.45 p.m.*

I am thinking of making a speech on Saturday or Monday next, in which I should seek to dispel the impression on the German mind that the Chancellor of the Exchequer's speech at Lanark was one-sided, and should say plainly that Europe would have little sympathy for the Czechs if they were thought to be wilfully or evasively blocking the concessions which are essential for a settlement. But if I say this, I must repeat in appropriate form the order of ideas expressed at Lanark. The general conclusion of my speech would be that Europe is not prepared to have its peace disturbed either by unreasonable Czechs or by acquisitive Germans.

I should value your comments [to Prague only] after you have consulted Lord Runciman [to both] though naturally you will appreciate that the decision as to the final wording of my speech may have to be based on considerations wider than those which will occur to you in Berlin/Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 250 to Prague.

No. 738

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 2, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 405 Telegraphic [C 9097/1941/18]*

BERLIN, *September 1, 1938, 9.21 p.m.*

Czechoslovakia.

State Secretary telephoned this morning to ask whether I could visit Minister for Foreign Affairs in the country this afternoon as he was leaving tonight for Berchtesgaden. Henlein will also be there.<sup>1</sup>

I accordingly did so and used to His Excellency almost exactly similar language as that reported in my telegram No. 403.<sup>2</sup> In view of penultimate sentence in that telegram I laid however greater emphasis on probability of Great Britain becoming involved if France found herself at war with Germany and Herr von Ribbentrop's attitude was that it would not be France's honour which was involved but her ambition for hegemony of Europe and that whole of Germany would view war as one of immoral aggression against her. I told him that every country was sole judge of its honour and that I could merely state the fact and beg him to take it into serious consideration.

Incidentally Minister for Foreign Affairs denied that he had instructed German Ministers to use language referred to in paragraph 5 of my telegram above-mentioned.

His Excellency was as usual discursive about Anglo-German relations. He

<sup>1</sup> i.e. at Berchtesgaden.

<sup>2</sup> No. 736.

asked to what I attributed growth of unfriendly feelings towards Germany in England and I gave him a list of reasons. He disputed them but did not take exception to our memorandum about military measures.

On the other hand he told me Herr Hitler had been literally infuriated by our action on May 21 and significance which had been attributed to it in foreign press. If such action were repeated he would not answer for consequences. I told His Excellency that I was aware of resentment which our *démarche* on May 21 had caused and had myself deplored attitude adopted by the press. I pointed out however that His Majesty's Government had been obliged to define their position on that occasion in fairness to Germany herself lest they should afterwards be reproached as they had been in July 1914 for not making their attitude sufficiently clear in advance. Nevertheless I did not anticipate another May 21 unless situation became so serious that something more than a mere definition was required.

As regards Sudetens Ribbentrop stated that no solution would now suffice unless it constituted a radical and genuine change in attitude adopted hitherto by M. Benes. Any half measures would be worse than useless and merely increase Germany's distrust of M. Benes which was already so great that German Government would be sceptical of whatever proposals he made. He hinted that some impartial tribunal would be required as guarantee that any scheme put forward was effectively and loyally executed.

Though I did not say so to Herr von Ribbentrop, I fear this will in fact prove necessary. On the whole however, Minister's attitude in regard to Czech problem was less discouraging than I anticipated. He did not mention the word 'plebiscite' though State Secretary was so strongly in favour of that solution last night that I derived impression that chances were that Herr Hitler would take that line at Nuremberg. I am still inclined to favour that probability if M. Benes has not accepted any possible alternative beforehand. There is a rumour however that Herr Hitler may instead announce there that he is summoning the Reichstag to deal with Sudeten-Czech question and thus leave the issue open for its decision and give more time for Lord Runciman to continue his negotiations.<sup>3</sup>

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>3</sup> On September 5, Sir N. Henderson was informed that his language in Nos. 736 and 738 was approved.

#### No. 739

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 252 Telegraphic [C 9047/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 1, 1938, 9.25 p.m.

Your telegram No. 493,<sup>1</sup> penultimate paragraph.

Following for Lord Runciman.

I had assumed from the words 'come out himself' in Mr. Newton's telegram No. 483<sup>2</sup> that you had reached a decision that circumstances might make it

<sup>1</sup> No. 730.

<sup>2</sup> No. 711.

necessary for you to pronounce and *publish* a scheme if direct negotiations between Benes and the Sudeten had failed to reach an early settlement. I was in agreement with this view for the reasons given in my telegram No. 243,<sup>3</sup> principal of which was that early publication would make it impossible for Hitler to declare at Nuremberg that Benes had never offered any appreciable concessions and to state that Germany was therefore obliged to take action herself in order to secure natural rights for the Sudeten. In other words, we hoped to take the wind out of Hitler's sails before Nuremberg. But I agree that it is no use publishing the Benes proposals if they are now recognised as inadequate.

As I see it, the position now is as follows. Benes and Kundt meet on Friday.<sup>4</sup> If they agree on a basis for negotiations well and good, and the Sudeten Party will no doubt inform Hitler of their agreement. In that event publication would be unnecessary. If however they fail to agree it will presumably become necessary for you to produce and hand to Benes and Sudeten a scheme of your own.

If you are on the whole opposed to publication, and I recognise force of your objections, it would seem to me essential that you should somehow ensure that knowledge of your proposals should be before Hitler in time for him to adapt his language at Nuremberg accordingly—and even if Hitler did hear of it in time, world public opinion would still remain uninformed unless your scheme was published. I am disposed to feel that canvassing of world opinion may in the circumstances be sufficiently important to warrant publication of the schemes immediately after communication to both parties without waiting for their agreement and in spite of objections you feel. These might I should have thought been in part at least avoided by the degree to which you might be able to dress your proposals up in form of general principles, which would still leave you manœuvre room.

<sup>3</sup> No. 710.

<sup>4</sup> i.e. September 2.

#### No. 740

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 2, 4.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 497 Telegraphic [C 9151/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 2, 1938, 1.33 p.m.

Your telegram No. 247.<sup>1</sup>

I have consulted Lord Runciman who informs me that in a conversation with Dr. Benes the other day and another only yesterday morning he drew his most serious attention to considerations advanced in your telegram with exception of pressing him to make an immediate public offer. Lord Runciman went so far as to say that he doubted whether anything less than substance of Karlsbad points would suffice to reach a settlement. Dr. Benes while naturally not receiving, I learn, the statement with any satisfaction did

<sup>1</sup> No. 727.

not indicate that even this condition would be impossible. Altogether his attitude was conciliatory and encouraging. He asked Lord Runciman to continue to pay him frequent visits.

With regard to immediate publication by the Czechoslovak Government of an offer I would submit the following observations:—

As stated in my telegram No. 494<sup>2</sup> Herr Henlein left yesterday to see Herr Hitler and convey to him the messages contained in my telegram No. 495.<sup>3</sup> The result of his interview which Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin hopes to learn on Sunday or perhaps Saturday may modify whole situation. There is also as stated in my telegram No. 493<sup>4</sup> to be a further interview between Dr. Benes and Herr Kundt today which is likely to affect question of a public statement.

Secondly it is difficult to see what statement Dr. Benes could usefully publish at this precise moment. Even if he were himself willing to go to length of accepting full Karlsbad programme a sudden and precipitant announcement to that effect might so disturb his own public that he would lose its support. Publication of his seven points would earn no gratitude from German side as stated in my telegram No. 493 while it might of course provoke embarrassing criticism from Czech side at this critical juncture. Dr. Benes has some misgivings already that he may be exposing himself as President to an excessive and unconstitutional extent.

Thirdly I am not wholly clear what purpose a public statement by President or by Czechoslovak Government is expected to serve if made in advance of any actual agreement between those immediately concerned. Sudeten leaders and presumably also Herr Hitler are already informed whereas German public opinion for whatever that may be worth could presumably only be favourably influenced with support of a government-controlled press and wireless. But German Government would be more likely to be irritated than conciliated by premature publication intended to force its hand. On the other hand if public opinion in western countries were to acclaim as eminently reasonable a settlement still unacceptable to the Reich would not risk of war between the Great Powers be increased?

I have discussed whole matter with Lord Runciman who feels that in the above circumstances and in view of Dr. Benes' conciliatory attitude it might confuse matters were I now to repeat representations which he himself has just made. I have however explained situation generally to my French colleague and was able to do so just as he was on his way to an audience which had been arranged yesterday afternoon for another purpose. M. de Lacroix visited me again in the evening on his return from the President and told me that he had mentioned disappointing impression made upon Lord Runciman by Dr. Benes' unadvisable memorandum and had strongly urged him to go to the limit of concession without further reservation or delay. In particular having (? had)<sup>5</sup> meeting with Herr Kundt today and Nuremberg Congress in mind he had advised the President that now was the moment to show himself both precise and generous.

<sup>2</sup> No. 731.

<sup>5</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>3</sup> No. 732.

<sup>4</sup> No. 730.

Dr. Hodza is dining at the Legation alone with Lord and Lady Runciman and myself this evening and I will of course make it clear to him that His Majesty's Government (? advise)<sup>6</sup> Czechoslovak Government to go to limit of concession immediately and unreservedly. If situation resulting from Herr Henlein's visit to Berchtesgaden should thus make more formal action on my part desirable I would propose to intervene with President or in other quarters at once as authorised in your telegram and without seeking further instructions. A premature and one-sided gesture here might only encourage Germans to go beyond the limit in further formulation of their demands.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>6</sup> The text is here uncertain.

No. 741

*Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Lindsay (Washington)*

*No. 597 Telegraphic [C 9280/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 2, 1938, 3.0 p.m.*

1. I should be glad if you would take an early opportunity to speak to the Secretary of State on the following lines about the present position in Czechoslovakia.

2. Lord Runciman's mission to Prague to act as investigator and mediator between the Czechoslovak Government and the Sudeten Germans was undertaken to prevent a deadlock arising in the negotiations between the two parties, as seemed probable at the end of July, and to suggest means for bringing them to success.

3. The constitutional question, viz. the provision of some degree of home rule for the Sudeten Germans within the Czechoslovak Republic, is the immediate issue confronting Lord Runciman. After his arrival in Prague his first task was to study the suggestions proposed by the two sides. It became clear, however, at a meeting between Czech and Sudeten representatives on August 17 that there was too wide a gulf between the respective proposals to permit of further negotiations on this basis. Lord Runciman prevented the Sudeten Party from closing the door on further negotiations and was considering preparing a new basis for their resumption, when he learnt on August 21 that new and much more generous proposals were being put forward by Dr. Benes, of which the most important features were:—

- (1) Three local autonomous districts in the Sudeten areas;
- (2) An exchange of German for Czech officials;
- (3) The withdrawal of Czech police from German districts;
- (4) Important financial and economic concessions.

Mr. Gwatkin returned to London on August 25 and reported that the Sudeten leaders regarded these proposals as a suitable basis for negotiations. Discussions had already taken place between Dr. Benes and Dr. Hodza, and Sudeten leaders on August 24 and 25 at which the atmosphere was good,



although it was somewhat disturbed by the issue on August 26 of a Sudeten party manifesto authorising party followers to defend themselves if attacked.

4. In view of the close approach of the Nazi Congress opening at Nuremberg on September 5, at which some definite pronouncement on the Sudeten problem might be expected from Herr Hitler, Lord Runciman emphasised the urgency of reaching an early agreement to Dr. Benes in such a form that it could be published before the Nuremberg meeting. Dr. Benes indicated that negotiations were proceeding satisfactorily and hoped that publication might be possible soon after his next meeting with Dr. Kundt on August 30. From conversations on August 28 with the Sudeten leaders, who had been in contact with Herr Hitler, it became clear, however, that they did not regard Dr. Benes' proposals as adequate, and that Herr Hitler had indicated that Sudeten question must be solved on the basis of Herr Henlein's eight Carlsbad points which go beyond Dr. Benes' offer of August 21.

5. On August 29, Lord Runciman received from Dr. Benes a written memorandum<sup>1</sup> purporting to amplify the Czech proposals. This document, in Lord Runciman's opinion, marked a retreat from practical suggestions to academic principles and appeared to justify Sudeten scepticism. He feared that publication of the Czech proposals in this form might do more harm than good. Negotiations meanwhile are proceeding and it is to be hoped that Dr. Benes' recent proposals may still be made to serve as an agreed basis for detailed negotiations between the Czech Government and the Sudeten leaders in the near future.

6. To sum up, a considerable advance towards agreement would appear to have been made recently in Prague largely owing to Lord Runciman's efforts. The present situation, however, gives cause for serious anxiety since it is evident that the German Government, while ready to give Lord Runciman's mission a chance, are not prepared to stand aside and wait much longer for the present negotiations to produce a satisfactory result. Early in August information was received by His Majesty's Government of extensive military preparations in Germany, including the calling up of reservists, the formation of reserve divisions, the extension of the service of second year recruits throughout October, the conscription of labour for the completion of German fortifications in the West, and measures empowering the military authorities to conscript civilian goods and services. These measures amount to partial mobilization and indicate that the German Government are determined to find a settlement of the Czechoslovak question this autumn, if necessary by force. His Majesty's Government have moreover received numerous other indications from various sources to this effect. Nor is it certain whether the German Government's real objective is to secure Sudeten adequate rights of self-government within Czechoslovakia, or whether they are aiming at nothing less than break-up of Czechoslovakia as an independent State.

7. These anxieties formed the background to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's speech at Lanark on August 27 and it is because of them that

<sup>1</sup> See No. 717, note 3.

His Majesty's Government decided to repeat once more the warning given by the Prime Minister on March 24. Time is short for it seems certain that Herr Hitler will have to speak about Czechoslovakia at the Nuremberg Congress between September 5 and 12, and, failing any outward and visible sign of progress before the Congress, he may feel obliged to make an unpleasant pronouncement, possibly backed by an appeal to force, based on the right of self-determination and perhaps demanding a plebiscite. He might however be restrained from committing himself to any such extreme action if agreement could be secured between the Czechoslovak Government and the Sudeten Germans without further delay as to the basis for a comprehensive settlement. Every effort is being made by Lord Runciman, with the support of His Majesty's Government, to establish such a basis.

8. In informing the United States Government of the above you should explain that I do so because I feel that the menace which the present situation represents for the peace of the world makes it desirable that the United States Government should be made aware of the efforts which His Majesty's Government are making in order to restrain Germany from forcible action and at the same time to induce the Czechoslovak Government to make without further delay or evasion the far-reaching concessions which are necessary if an agreed settlement is to be reached between the Czechoslovak Government and the Sudeten population.

#### No. 742

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 2, 4.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 498 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9152/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 2, 1938

Your telegram No. 339<sup>1</sup> to Berlin.

Lord Runciman is clear that President Benes and Czechoslovaks sufficiently realise now that they have to go a long way and he thinks that to hammer them further might provoke resentment and make them (? less)<sup>2</sup> disposed to listen to him.

On the other hand delivery in public of some more words provided they recognise the efforts which Dr. Benes and Dr. Hodza are unquestionably making might be timely and assist them to secure acceptance of necessary sacrifices and risks. It must of course be borne in mind that Czechs are an obstinate people and react unfavourably to threats so words should be carefully chosen and addressed as you already intend also to Germans.

In particular I would suggest phrase 'concessions which are essential for a settlement' would be unfair as logical conclusion would be that Czechs must give way on every point whether reasonable or unreasonable which Germans may consider essential for a settlement.

Lord Runciman has observed that you of course with advice of His Majesty's Ambassador Berlin will be best able to judge the time to be taken

<sup>1</sup> No. 737.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

in order to influence what may be said at Nuremberg and that something is likely to depend on such message, if any, as Henlein may bring back from Berchtesgaden. Lord Runciman hopes to be able to report on this to you by Sunday.

Repeated to Berlin.

No. 743

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 2, 4.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 499 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9153/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 2, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

As you may care to see some draft suggestions I add following in case you can find in them some useful phrases:

'I appeal to both peoples to reach satisfactory settlement at the earliest possible date. Not to shrink from such far-reaching adjustments or even sacrifices as may be necessary on one side, and on the other to show spirit of compromise and to make a real response and show genuine intention to collaborate in building up a State in which all nationalities concerned can co-operate in a spirit of loyal partnership. I believe such a settlement would be possible and be of lasting advantage to all parties. His Majesty's Government has no object in view except to assist in promotion of such a settlement and I hope grievances, however deep rooted they may be in history, will be forgotten on both sides so that the way may be open for a happier future.'

See also paragraph 4 of my despatch in print 117<sup>2</sup> of April 19.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 742.

<sup>2</sup> No. 150 in Volume I of this Series.

No. 744

*Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Lindsay (Washington)*  
*No. 598 Telegraphic [C 9158/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 2, 1938, 6.30 p.m.

The United States Ambassador saw the Prime Minister on August 30 and discussed with him the Czechoslovak situation.

Mr. Kennedy asked whether the Prime Minister thought that there was any possibility of Germany marching into Czechoslovakia. He appeared surprised when the Prime Minister told him that we had heard from various sources that Hitler had made up his mind to invade Czechoslovakia, and that we could not therefore exclude this possibility. The Prime Minister then said that it had been suggested to us that if His Majesty's Government declared that they would try by force to prevent a German invasion of Czechoslovakia, Hitler would abandon the idea. We were not, however, in

a position to stop Hitler, and in the circumstances it would be unwise to utter threats. Mr. Kennedy agreed that this was the right position to adopt.

The Prime Minister then said that in his opinion we ought not to accept the view that war was inevitable, at any rate until we had exhausted every effort to prevent it by the exercise of influence, mediation, etc. We were still considering what more we might do in the event of the Runciman mission failing. Some said that, after a successful attack upon Czechoslovakia, Hitler could not be stopped anywhere else and that Germany would then dominate Europe. He did not accept this view and mentioned that the absorption of Austria had not proved easy and had in any event stirred world opinion. Mr. Kennedy agreed, and added that if Hitler seized Czechoslovakia 'it will be hell'. He expressed the belief that if France went in and we had to go in too, the United States would follow before long.

The Ambassador asked whether the Prime Minister thought that there was anything that the United States or the President could do. For example, should the President make another speech? The Prime Minister thought not, at any rate at present. The President's recent speech had contained a warning and had been of great value, but repetition now would be bad. Mr. Kennedy agreed and he added that he was convinced that President Roosevelt had decided 'to go in with Chamberlain; whatever course Chamberlain desires to adopt he would think right'.

I myself saw the United States Ambassador on August 31. He told me he felt that the present attitude of the German Government was more in the nature of bluff and intimidation than indicative that final decisions had been taken. The United States Ambassadors in Paris and Berlin, whom he had recently seen, shared this view. They also thought that whereas a few weeks ago the French Government had taken the situation more seriously than His Majesty's Government, the opposite was now the case.

Mr. Kennedy proceeded to develop the thesis that in the present state of world economics, it was by no means certain or even probable that any expansion of territorial control would benefit those making it. The Nazi Party might have managed to work their economic system over a restricted area, but the wider the area, the greater would be their difficulties. In the end (if control were obtained over South-East Europe), Germany would gradually find herself paralysed by the economic pressure evoked by these difficulties. He realised that his arguments were not necessarily conclusive and that there was much to be said on the other side.

The Ambassador thought that while American opinion would be much shocked by any German aggression, it would not feel it necessary or justifiable to plunge Europe into a general war on such an issue.

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 2, 9.30 p.m.)*  
*No. 407 Telegraphic [C 9160/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 2, 1938, 7.28 p.m.

Your telegram No. 339.<sup>1</sup>

Lanark speech is no longer acute topic of discussion here and it is significant that neither Minister's Secretary nor Herr von Ribbentrop referred to it in conversation with me.

The reason for this change is not far to seek. As stated in Mr. Kirkpatrick's telegram No. 400,<sup>2</sup> the basis of German complaint against the attitude of His Majesty's Government was that whereas Sir J. Simon threatened Germany publicly, pressure on Prague was applied privately, with the result that public opinion has been misled into thinking that on merits of the case His Majesty's Government was on the side of Czechoslovakia and against Sudetens.

Since then German Government and to a lesser degree the public have become aware that His Majesty's Government are making a serious effort to induce the Czechs to draft necessary concessions. In consequence a new phase has opened, Lanark speech has been shelved and Germans appear holding their hand for a short time in the hope of results.

As regards your speech I venture to submit the following observations as seen from angle of this post, though I must at the same time emphasize that if Herr Hitler is to follow the path of reason experience shows that it would be dangerous to represent him as being compelled to yield to threat of force. This applies of course also to British press and particularly to any reference to May 21.

It would have a good effect on German Government and might be useful in educating British and Czech *public* opinion if you pointed out that His Majesty's Government were urging Czechs to make concessions not for reasons of opportunism or self-interest, but solely for the sake of peace in Europe and on the ground of principle of self-determination for which democracies stood in the World War.

As regards the attitude of His Majesty's Government to Germany, I hope that it may be possible to say that Herr Hitler has repeatedly declared his desire to achieve a peaceful solution, that you believe in his goodwill and in sincerity of his declared love of peace and that you consequently are confident that he will co-operate with us in preserving the peace of Europe any disturbance of which might entail incalculable consequences. Put this way, the warning associates Herr Hitler with us in our quest for a settlement by ordinance [*sic*].

It would also be useful to point out that Sudeten question is a problem in itself as far as connexion with [*sic*] considerations by which real issue is

<sup>1</sup> No. 737.

<sup>2</sup> No. 718.

unfortunately too often obscured such as balance of power in Europe, Czechoslovakia as bastion of democracy or as bulwark against a German 'push to the east', etc. etc.

Reference might also be made to forces which are working for settlement by direct action together with comment that if they are to be checkmated, Czechoslovak Government must appreciate the realities particularly since the more generous they are the safer will be their position since it would be based on good not ill-will of their German citizens.

I would also suggest, though outside my sphere, that sympathetic reference to Henlein would be useful and encouraging to the latter and it might be added that Sudetens themselves have shown their . . .<sup>3</sup> this moderation by seeking solution within the frontiers of Czechoslovakia itself.

Repeated to Prague.

<sup>3</sup> The text is here uncertain.

#### No. 746

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 3, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 501 Telegraphic [C 9164/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 2, 1938, 8.5 p.m.

Meeting today, Friday, between President and Sudeten German negotiators was unsatisfactory. The latter practically rejected Dr. Benes' latest proposals and produced new memorandum containing their counter-proposals. In the course of lengthy discussions Sudeten German representatives showed that they required a reconstructed State such as would be in the opinion of Dr. Benes amount to its destruction. They declined his invitation to meet again on Saturday but agreed to another meeting on Monday.

Disappointing as is the above information which has just been given to Lord Runciman by Dr. Benes it may be observed that the Sudeten negotiators are likely to have been influenced first by their knowledge that they can fall back on the scheme which Lord Runciman has promised to produce, if necessary, and secondly by a determination to give nothing away until they know the result of Herr Henlein's visit to Herr Hitler.

Repeated to Berlin.

#### No. 747

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 3, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 231 Telegraphic [C 9163/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 2, 1938, 8.58 p.m.

Your telegram No. 231 Saving.<sup>1</sup>

I informed Minister for Foreign Affairs accordingly this afternoon. M. Bonnet was pleased at Lord Runciman's action and grateful for information.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. See No. 732, note 2.

He told me he had said much the same thing yesterday to German Ambassador, only in a more expanded form. He had pointed out to Count Welczeck that if Germany attacked Czechoslovakia France would be bound to fulfil her engagements to that Power, but that if Sudeten negotiations were brought to a peaceful conclusion there would be an excellent chance of a Franco-German settlement (with agreement and approval of Great Britain). France would be quite ready to accept any solution proposed by Lord Runciman. Surely the German Chancellor, after notable bloodless victories that he had gained recently in so many spheres, would gain more by accepting it too than by plunging Europe into a general war? He had added that if M. Benes would not accept Lord Runciman's verdict France would consider herself released from her engagements to Czechoslovakia.

After this friendly conversation, which had seemed to impress the German Ambassador very favourably, some newspaper had tried to make out that M. Bonnet had delivered to the latter a kind of ultimatum. This false report has been traced to a German Jewish emigré in France.

M. Bonnet still feels the situation is fraught with danger but rather less so than a week ago. He says, however, the German Government have withdrawn all their funds from Bank of England and feels that this is rather ominous.

Repeated to Berlin and Prague.

**No. 748**

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 3, 9.30 a.m.)  
No. 408 Telegraphic [C 9165/1941/18]

BERLIN, September 2, 1938, 9.22 p.m.

In the course of my conversation with the State Secretary on Wednesday night he remarked somewhat ominously that war in 1914 might possibly have been avoided if Great Britain had spoken in time. I agreed but pointed out not only how difficult it was to be too precise but also how undesirable I personally regarded it to use language which by damaging Herr Hitler's prestige and provoking his resentment might well bring about the opposite result to that desired. State Secretary agreed to this very emphatically and asserted that public threats at this moment might cause incalculable harm and moreover would make no impression whatever. At the same time he asked whether it might not be possible for me to have a personal talk with Herr Hitler at Nuremberg? I commented on the improbability of getting such an opportunity.

When I saw the Minister for Foreign Affairs yesterday he asked me about my arrangements for Nuremberg. I told him that I would be there on the morning of September 7 for the Chancellor's reception of Diplomatic Body that afternoon but that I was undecided how long to stop lest I should find myself listening to speeches which His Majesty's Government would consider

undesirable or derogatory. At the same time I asked him whether he thought it possible that Herr Hitler might wish to speak to me there on some other occasion than at the reception where any real talk would be impossible. I made it clear that this was an entirely personal idea. Herr von Ribbentrop replied that the Party Day was an entirely internal affair but said that he would mention the point in case Herr Hitler might wish it.

It seems to me that (a) one's presence at Nuremberg may possibly have some restraining value and (b) that it is a pity to miss opportunity which is not frequent here of making various contacts with, for instance, Field-Marshal Göring and Baron von Neurath. The latter, who will have seen Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden, told me that he would like to see me on September 9 at Nuremberg. He does not get there before.

May I have your authority to make my plans as seem best to me?<sup>1</sup> French Ambassador and I are going by the same train to Nuremberg but he proposes to leave again the same night. United States Ambassador arrives there on the morning of September 5 and leaves immediately after the reception on September 7. I might if I think it desirable stop till afternoon of September 9 so that duration of Mr. Wilson's stay and my own would be the same. We are in agreement that this course is suitable. If Herr Hitler makes big political speech it is likely to be at the end of the week, i.e. 10th or 11th and not earlier.

I am keeping French Ambassador and United States Ambassador fully informed. If anything quite intolerable were said in my presence I would propose to leave at once and return to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> Sir N. Henderson was authorized by telegram on September 4 to make such plans as seemed best in the circumstances.

#### No. 749

*Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received September 3, 9.20 a.m.)*

*No. 65 Telegraphic [C 9187/1941/18]*

WARSAW, September 2, 1938, 11.55 p.m.

1. I asked Minister for Foreign Affairs today at my first interview on returning from leave for his views on Czechoslovak situation. M. Beck said that he was still of opinion that Herr Hitler had no wish to precipitate a general conflagration and that such military measures as he had taken might not be more than a demonstration likely to influence the Powers concerned.

2. On the other hand M. Beck was pessimistic as to possibility of finding a solution for Sudeten German and other minority problems though he would not be in possession of the latest proposals until arrival tomorrow of Polish Minister in Prague.

3. He said that the fact that Czechoslovak Government had been unable



in any way to satisfy Slovak (*sic*)<sup>1</sup> aspirations where there was strong foreign pressure indicated that they had not fully realized . . .<sup>2</sup> of situation.

4. I drew His Excellency's attention to statements in the press that Germany had sounded certain Governments as to their attitude. M. Beck immediately informed me that Germany had in no way approached Polish Government in this sense and that when he saw the German Ambassador yesterday nothing of this kind had been mentioned.

5. He admitted that arrangements just come to for a Polish air line to Budapest and a Czechoslovak air line to Riga indicated a step forward, but I fear that he did not display any more sympathy with Czechoslovak Government than on previous occasions though he was undoubtedly more moderate in his language.

Repeated to Berlin and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> The *sic* appears in the file copy of this telegram.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

#### No. 750

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 3)*

*No. 559 Saving: Telegraphic [C 9157/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 2, 1938

1. I had a long talk with the United States Ambassador this morning.

2. Mr. Bullitt told me in confidence that he had only yesterday informed President Roosevelt that in his opinion the chances of peace and war were about evenly balanced.

3. His Excellency's considered opinion is that if German troops cross the Czech frontier France will undoubtedly fight on behalf of Czechoslovakia. This she will do not from any particular love for that country but because she realises that not only her honour but her very existence will be at stake, and that if she did not honour her bond her turn would come, later perhaps but none the less inevitably, and that then she would have to fight in far less favourable conditions. The great majority of the French people felt this, and any possible opposition from M. Flandin and others on the Right would quickly be swept aside, if indeed it were ever even formulated.

4. I asked Mr. Bullitt's explanation for the almost uncanny calm that the French have recently displayed in the face of what amounts to German mobilisation, and he thinks it due to a very fine feeling on their part that the hour is too grave for any display of undue excitement, let alone panic, that they can only die once, and that deeds and not words are the order of the day.

5. My United States colleague thinks there is no doubt about the French army being the finest in the world today, although there is a relative weakness in the air *vis-à-vis* of [*sic*] Germany. General Vuillemin, he said however, although impressed in Germany by that Power's capacity of output in the

aviation line, did not take a very favourable view of German pilots as a whole.

6. Mr. Bullitt said that, as he had told Göring some time ago, when passing through Berlin, opinion in the United States was almost unanimously anti-German. Göring retorted that there were at least five million German-speaking Americans to be reckoned with, to which Mr. Bullitt replied that there were also at least five million trees on which to hang them if that proved necessary. After this the conversation had proceeded on quite friendly but less controversial lines.

7. I asked what this anti-German feeling meant; did it imply any likelihood of United States participation in hostilities at an early stage? The Ambassador replied that not only did it not imply that, but that it did not even imply any alteration of the Neutrality Act favourable to the Powers fighting Germany, at the very earliest, till after the meeting of Congress in January. Much would depend, however, upon the incidents of the war and upon the manner [? in which] Germany waged it. Against the anti-German feeling must be set a very definite objection on the part of the American people to be involved again in hostilities in Europe only twenty years after the last war, with the likelihood that they would again get more kicks than ha'pence for their help. He has made this clear to the French Government, and is certain that they have no illusions on this score.

8. Mr. Bullitt's information is that Hitler believes that France will fight for Czechoslovakia but that Great Britain will stand aside. From another good source I hear that my German colleague telegraphed last night to Berlin to say that if German troops crossed the Czech frontier war with France and Great Britain would be inevitable. Unfortunately Count Welczeck, like most civilised Germans, carries little or no weight with the Führer.

9. Finally Mr. Bullitt told me that Hitler had invited M. Herriot and M. Piétri to Nuremberg and that he gathered they were accepting the invitation. This seemed to be a slightly more hopeful sign.

10. What the Ambassador fears almost more than Hitler's fanaticism is some desperate acts by German or Russian 'agents provocateurs'. He feels that Russia's great wish is to provoke a general conflagration in which she herself will play but little part, beyond perhaps a little bombing from a distance, but after which she will arise like a phoenix, but out of all our ashes, and bring about a world revolution.

11. Meanwhile Mr. Bullitt believes that the last word lies with Lord Runciman, against whose summing up Germany will hardly dare to act.

#### No. 751

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 3)*

*No. 561 Saving: Telegraphic [C 9155/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 2, 1938

M. Bonnet told me this afternoon that he has been pestered lately by the Soviet Ambassador, acting on instructions from M. Litvinoff, to show more

firmness in Czechoslovakia and to urge greater firmness on the part of His Majesty's Government. M. Suritz expressed regret that the French Government seemed to consult the latter more than they did the Soviet Government.

M. Bonnet replied that he had noticed, and approved, the caution showed by the Soviet Government *vis-à-vis* of [*sic*] their neighbour, Japan, and he proposed to display similar caution in regard to Spain and Germany. He enquired incidentally what help the Soviets would give in case of a German attack on Czechoslovakia. M. Suritz said he would enquire of M. Litvinoff, but so far nothing has come back.

M. Suritz also pressed M. Bonnet, after Franco's recent unsatisfactory reply, to declare publicly that France would intervene in Spain. This M. Bonnet refused to do. He pointed out, moreover, that if France intervened in Spain she could hardly be expected to take up an even firmer line over Czechoslovakia than she was already doing.

M. Bonnet says that Russia's one wish is to stir up general war in the troubled waters of which she will fish. He here confirms the opinion expressed to me by Mr. Bullitt (see my telegram No. 559 Saving<sup>1</sup> of to-day).

Having heard alarmist rumours indirectly from M. Flandin that war was inevitable and was being precipitated by M. Herriot, M. Mandel and M. Reynaud, I sounded M. Bonnet as to any possible desire for war amongst public men in France. He assured me that M. Herriot was not at all so minded. His one bogey was Mussolini, but, strangely enough, not the Germans, for whom he retained a certain admiration. Indeed he might some day help in bringing about better relations with them if the present crisis passed away. He had been invited to Nuremberg, but too late and could not go, though other prominent Frenchmen would.

M. Bonnet, however, admitted that M. Mandel, though not M. Reynaud, was bellicose, but he alone in the Cabinet could not do much. His feelings were doubtless prompted by his Jewish origin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 750.

### No. 752

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 3, 4.50 p.m.)*  
*No. 502 Telegraphic [C 9167/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 3, 1938, 12.15 p.m.

My telegram No. 497<sup>1</sup> last paragraph.  
Confidential.

After dinner last night I took opportunity of informing Dr. Hodza of tenor of instructions conveyed to me in your telegram No. 247.<sup>2</sup> He showed that for his part he realised need for making immediate and far reaching concessions and indicated that it would assist him if I made formal representations to the President. With concurrence of Lord Runciman I accord-

<sup>1</sup> No. 740.

<sup>2</sup> No. 727.

ingly made urgent application first thing this morning for an audience. I will telegraph as soon as it has taken place but in meantime suggest if you think desirable to give any publicity to my *démarche* this should be deferred until Monday. By then the Sudeten German negotiators may be expected to have committed themselves to whatever attitude they decide to adopt in light of information brought back from Berchtesgaden by Herr Henlein.

Thanks to Lord Runciman's intervention interview was arranged between Dr. Hodza and Herr Kundt for this morning. Dr. Hodza will then in particular make a special effort to solve question of 'Volksgruppe' and its 'juridical personality' which is one of the main outstanding difficulties.

Views expressed by Dr. Hodza last night should of course in the circumstances be treated as very confidential.

Repeated to Berlin.

#### No. 753

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 3, 3.50 p.m.)*  
*No. 503 Telegraphic [C 9168/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 3, 1938, 2.0 p.m.

My telegrams 501<sup>1</sup> and 497.<sup>2</sup>

President Benes yesterday expressed to Lord Runciman strong view that premature publication of an offer would not advance and might wreck the prospects of agreement as it would look like admission that negotiations had failed.

During the conversation Lord Runciman warned the President that if it came to choice between acceptance of Karlsbad programme or war he should be under no illusion as to what British choice would be.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 746.

<sup>2</sup> No. 740.

#### No. 754

*Sir N. Charles (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 3, 7.45 p.m.)*  
*No. 561 Telegraphic [C 9177/1941/18]*

ROME, September 3, 1938, 6.10 p.m.

Paris telegram No. 220<sup>1</sup> of August 30th.

While not wishing to cast doubts on gravity of the issues mentioned by Second Bureau I feel bound to say there are no indications here to suggest Italy might be preparing for large scale military operations in the near future.

Owing to experience gained in last manoeuvres Italian General Staff have decided to introduce immediately new divisional organisation which must involve dislocation of military machine for some months. We have no

<sup>1</sup> No. 721.

knowledge of any concentration of troops on northern or western frontier. Discharged conscripts returned home in normal way at the end of August. French Embassy at Rome do not attach undue importance to expulsion of farmers from neighbourhood of Isola.

Air Attaché has been informed by Italian Air Ministry that owing to re-organisation occasioned by creation of new formations resulting in the movement of many units Italian Air Force would not be in a settled state before middle or end of November. Indications from latter and other sources show that this is a straightforward interchange of units with no immediate military significance.

As regards Italian Navy no special movements are known to have taken place except last minute cancellation of world cruise of two cruisers.

Repeated to Paris.

#### No. 755

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 4, 10.0 a.m.)  
No. 504 Telegraphic [C 9169/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 3, 1938, 7.30 p.m.

Following from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin for Mr. Strang.

Herr Kundt explained to us yesterday (September 2) the result of his discussion with the President that morning. He had accepted with certain additional suggestions of no vital importance the President's proposals relating to:

- A. State officials;
- B. Proportionality in public municipal appointments (budgetary grants, allocation of State orders and public works);
- C. Loan (with additions);
- D. Language;
- E. Police (but with immediate action in withdrawing State police).

He has asked for consideration of additional suggestions under the following headings:

A. New elections for Social Insurance Organisations also for mayors of certain communes and fresh nominees of Social Commissions in accordance with results of the 1935 Elections.

B. Reparations: Commission to study the removal of disabilities suffered by the Germans for the last twenty years, e.g. those resulting from land reform;

C. Governmental instructions to officials that members of Sudeten German Party should not be penalised and finally:

D. Self-government Proposals.

Everything of course turned on this last point—self-government. The other points can be agreed upon without great difficulty. Dr. Kundt considered that the President's present proposal is the same in principle as nationalities statute only with 'Gau' substituted for 'province'.

He saw the same objection that this proposal leaves Germans living in

Gaus other than the three German Gaus at the mercy of a Czech majority; further he thought that the creation of 20 Gaus would be cumbersome and very expensive since a large number of additional officials would have to be taken on.

He said that no compromise is possible between the demands of Sudeten German party (eight Karlsbad points) and the proposals hitherto made by Czechoslovak Government; but a compromise is possible between the principles represented in the President's position *viz.* united sovereignty and integrity of the State—and principles of eight Karlsbad points.

Repeated to Berlin.

#### No. 756

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 4, 10.0 a.m.)  
No. 505 Telegraphic [C 9170/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 3, 1938, 8.55 p.m.

Following for Secretary of State from Lord Runciman.

Following is a summary of the proposals which I am preparing, though they are of course subject to alteration in the light of developments here.

1. Recognition of equality of 'Volks' and 'Volksgruppe' and of principle of their 'Rechtspersönlichkeit' in the State. The 'Rechtspersönlichkeit' will be expressed through National organs in provinces and districts as described below.

2. Recognition of principle of language equality.

3. Proportionate allocation of officials' posts. Exchange of officials on population basis to begin at once and be completed over an agreed period.

4. Provinces to be administered by an elected Governor, and an executive responsible to a Diet which is elected on the basis of proportional representation. In any province where a fifteen per cent. national minority exists, a separate administration to be established for that national minority. Provision to be made for all such National Diets in a province to meet periodically in joint session to deal with matters of common concern to the whole province. National Executives would similarly meet in joint session.

5. Commission composed of representatives of Nationalities in equal numbers to be appointed forthwith, and report within four months on division of subjects between Central and Provincial Government on the basis of granting as full powers as possible to provinces. It will also report on division between subjects within sole competence of national Diets in provinces and those which are matters of common concern.

6. Central Government to remain unchanged but all bills affecting one or more Nationalities to be referred to Racial Curiae composed of all members of each of the Nationalities concerned. The Curiae would report and have power to propose amendments for consideration of Parliament.

An Advisory State Council (to advise the President) would be appointed consisting of representatives of the Cabinet and also two or three representatives of each Nationality.

Advisory Committees would also be appointed of members of National Executives concerned with a particular subject (e.g. finance) which would meet periodically under the chairmanship of the Central Minister concerned for the purpose of securing uniformity in legislation between Provinces.

7. Districts to be organized on the same basis as provinces and under control of provincial authorities concerned.

Minorities under fifteen per cent. in districts to have individual Minority Treaty protection, and to be allowed to establish committees for protecting their position with the right of appeal by individual or committee to Supreme Administration Court.

8. Secondly. Proportionate grants-in-aid from State Budget to Provincial or National Provincial authorities. Separate Budgets for Provincial or National Provincial Governments with the right of taxation.

Loan of 'x' million kronen of which large proportion for German areas.

9. State police in so far as they have recently been introduced into frontier and other regions where they had not previously been stationed should be progressively withdrawn—their functions being taken on by gendarmerie and communal police who had previously exercised them. The stages and dates of progress of the withdrawals to be fixed forthwith and the first stages appropriately put into action at once.

Repeated to Berlin.

#### No. 757

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 6)*

No. 930 [C 9273/1941/18]

BERLIN, September 3, 1938

My Lord,

I have the honour to acquaint your Lordship, in case it may be useful for future purposes of record, that, before leaving for London last week, I had a long conversation with Baron von Neurath on the 26th August at his house in Berlin.

2. Baron von Neurath told me that he had not seen Herr Hitler since June and could, therefore, not speak with definite authority as in former days. The Chancellor had, however, told him that morning that he hoped to have a talk with him in the course of the week.

3. His Excellency said that, though out of touch with Herr Hitler, he had spoken to many people during the last month or so, and he regarded the situation as serious and as having much deteriorated since June (he probably meant since the 21st May). He attributed this to the greater intransigence of the Czechs, the constant incidents which occurred in the Sudeten lands, and the growing belief that the British Government would never bring any real pressure on Dr. Benes, who without it would never go far enough to satisfy the Sudeten. Herr Hitler was losing patience and the extremists here were working on his sentimentality by exaggerating incidents which without exaggeration were bad enough.

4. I interrupted him to remark that the German press was doing great harm to the German case by the violence of this campaign. Dr. Goebbels might understand German mentality, but he lamentably misunderstood foreign, and particularly British, mentality. Baron von Neurath, who dislikes Dr. Goebbels, readily agreed, and I urged him to speak to the Chancellor in that sense.

5. His Excellency then proceeded to enlarge upon the lack of enthusiasm in the country for war and went so far as to observe that this lack of enthusiasm in the back areas would be a serious handicap after the first few months of war, if it occurred. Nor were the generals themselves enthusiastic. Their instructions were to be 100 per cent. ready for all eventualities as from a certain date, but, so far as he could discover, they had no other instructions and had no information as to the Chancellor's real intentions.

6. I commented, in this connexion, on political dangers of Germany's test mobilisation, but Baron von Neurath assured me categorically that these military measures had been arranged since the spring and had no original connexion with the present situation. He added that he himself did not believe that Herr Hitler had yet made up his mind what action he would take. Nor did he know who were the Chancellor's present advisers. Anyway he saw as little as possible of Herr von Ribbentrop, and that in itself was an intolerable situation, when the Chancellor would not see his own Minister for Foreign Affairs.

7. In Baron von Neurath's personal opinion the only just solution of the Sudeten problem was a plebiscite. I argued at length against this and at the same time took the opportunity of defining the British position in the event of war breaking out either as a result of German aggression or of Czech resistance to a plebiscite. I begged his Excellency to remind Herr Hitler that if France felt obliged by her honour to intervene on behalf of the Czechs, circumstances *might* be such as to compel us to participate, just as I realised that there were possibly other circumstances which *might* compel Herr Hitler to intervene on behalf of the Sudeten. I pointed out, in particular, that any direct German action, so long as Lord Runciman was at Prague, would be so resented by the whole British nation that it might be impossible to refrain from taking up the challenge. His Excellency hurriedly intervened with the remark that there could be no question of that. Even if, I continued, the German Government could succeed in justifying an eventual aggression in German eyes, I was afraid that the horrors of war would so incense the world, and especially British public opinion, that I feared that His Majesty's Government might again find themselves in a difficult position. It was, I added, considerations such as these which had been the motive of our representations to the German Government on the 21st May. Those representations had unfortunately been misrepresented in the foreign and British press, and aggravated by Herr von Ribbentrop's violent language to my Czech colleague, but they had had no other object than to make, as was only fair and necessary, the British point of view clear to the German Government.

8. I suggested to Baron von Neurath that he might take the opportunity



of his forthcoming talk with the Chancellor to tell him what I had said in this respect. His Excellency replied that he still hoped that Lord Runciman would find a way out of the *impasse*, though he added with great emphasis that it would be better if he left Prague with no result rather than that he should present his own definite cut-and-dried scheme.

9. Finally, he observed that he was coming to Nuremberg on the 9th September and would like to see me then. I told him that I would go there for the diplomatic reception on the 7th, but that I did not know how long I would stop as I was apprehensive lest I should find myself listening to speeches of which my Government might disapprove. His Excellency replied that after six years' close association he knew Herr Hitler pretty well and that, unless he had greatly changed, he did not believe that he would burn his boats at Nuremberg. Herr Hitler preferred to do things in his own way and not as he was expected to do.

I have, &c.,  
NEVILLE HENDERSON

No. 758

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 4, 10.0 a.m.)*  
*No. 506 Telegraphic [C 9171/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 4, 1938, 12.40 a.m.

My telegram No. 502.<sup>1</sup>

At audience today<sup>2</sup> I began by explaining to President Benes that since Lord Runciman's arrival I had refrained from asking to see him despite difficulty and anxiety of the times through which we were passing because I knew that he was making great efforts to solve Sudeten question and was in close touch with Lord Runciman for that purpose. A critical juncture had however now arrived when His Majesty's Government felt that the President ought to be left in no doubt as to their views and attitude.

I then proceeded to quote at length from your telegram No. 247<sup>3</sup> omitting any reference to question of publishing an offer or to Dr. Benes' seven proposals. I wound up my statement by reminding the President of what I had said on May 7 as to the views of His Majesty's Government regarding the unfavourable military situation in Czechoslovakia. I had then pointed out that in the event of hostilities whether or not any allied Great Power came to the assistance of Czechoslovakia her territory would be a theatre of war and would be likely, whatever the ultimate issue, to be overrun and occupied for a long period. To these apprehensions should now be added growing danger of further devastation by civil war. I did not care to speculate on results for Czechoslovakia if in the end results of . . .<sup>4</sup> war were unfavourable. What I wanted to impress upon him was that however favourable the final outcome it was more than doubtful that Czechoslovakia

<sup>1</sup> No. 752.

<sup>3</sup> No. 727.

<sup>2</sup> This telegram was drafted on September 3.

<sup>4</sup> The text is here uncertain.

would be re-established in its present form or in such a re-adjusted form as may now be essential to avert war. Conclusion that I wished to emphasize was that it was vital for Czechoslovakia to accept great sacrifices and even if necessary considerable risks now in order to avoid much greater risks leading to disaster.

Dr. Benes seemed painfully impressed by my (? remarks)<sup>5</sup> and in particular by my reference to Karlsbad programme. On that subject I explained to him that I could not officially say more than was in . . .<sup>5</sup> but my own interpretation of this was that Czechoslovak Government should go forthwith and unreservedly to limit of concession, which limit ought not to stop short of the eight Karlsbad points if a settlement could not be obtained otherwise. The President observed that he would think over my communication but that his difficulty in accepting Karlsbad programme was that no one could tell him what it really meant so that if he were to accept it he would not know what he was accepting and he would in fact be signing a blank cheque. The Germans . . .<sup>5</sup> interpretation of Karlsbad programme in any way they pleased and if he objected to their interpretation accused him of having betrayed his bond. If concrete measures were proposed he could probably accept them. He mentioned particular difficulty in ascertaining what would be meant by conferring a juridical personality on 'Volksgroupe'.

I pointed out that whilst I appreciated difficulties there had been months in which to overcome them and his attitude suggested that it was hopeless to expect progress. Dr. Benes seemed embarrassed by that . . .<sup>5</sup> at a loss, reiterating several times that while his seven points had not been accepted they had not been rejected. This showed progress and another indication of it was production of further proposals by Sudeten negotiators. By my attitude of concern and disappointment I showed that these evidences of progress were in my opinion scanty and unconvincing. I observed that they would hardly satisfy public opinion generally and still less the leaders in the Reich, that either real or quick progress was being made at this juncture when sands were running out. Continued in my immediately following telegram unnumbered.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

<sup>5</sup> The text here is uncertain.

#### No. 759

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 4, 10.0 a.m.)*  
*Unnumbered Telegraphic [C 9171/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 4, 1938, 12.55 a.m.<sup>1</sup>

Following is continuation of my telegram No. 506.<sup>2</sup>

I warned him again of the danger of something being said at Nuremberg which would make his task infinitely more difficult.

<sup>1</sup> This telegram and the one printed in No. 760 appear to have been despatched in reverse order.

<sup>2</sup> No. 758.

Dr. Benes let fall a remark that if the country were pushed too far, there might be internal trouble. I rejoined that the country would in that case be committing suicide. Dr. Benes further remarked that he was being pushed into capitulation and would enquire in Paris whether the French Government thought that Herr Hitler's ultimatum would [*sic*]<sup>3</sup> be accepted. I replied that so far as I knew there was no ultimatum but of course one might come in the near future. He further remarked that acceptance of Karlsbad programme would mean the dissolution of the State. I rejoined that, in the first place, I did not see why it should have such consequences and secondly that he might perhaps be able to obtain a solution short of the full Karlsbad programme. I reminded him, however, of what Lord Runciman had said to the effect that British choice would certainly be the Karlsbad programme rather than war (see my telegram No. 503<sup>4</sup>).

As regards need for some outward and visible sign of progress in immediate future, Dr. Benes said that he realised more clearly than he had before what was desired. He was about to prepare a reply to new Sudeten proposals which would register further progress. Sudeten negotiators might wish to answer his second memorandum by a second one of their own and perhaps it would be possible in agreement with them to publish these two latter papers as evidence of advancement which negotiations had achieved. Prospects of any reassuring announcement being possible during the next few days on these lines did not seem to me good so I expressed the hope that at least some agreed communiqué could be issued, unless you see any objection, next week, recording view of both parties that they were making real progress.

The President subsequently asked Lord Runciman to see him and showed that he had been considerably shaken by my representations. Lord Runciman made it clear that in his opinion they had in no way over-rated the gravity of the position and that it behoved President Benes to make all sacrifices necessary to preserve existence of his country.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

<sup>3</sup> This word should probably read 'should'. See No. 762.

<sup>4</sup> No. 753.

#### No. 760

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 4, 10.0 a.m.)*  
*No. 507 Telegraphic [C 9172/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 4, 1938, 12.40 a.m.

My telegram No. 506.<sup>1</sup>

I also taxed the President with inability of his Government to implement their promises in regard to appointment of German officials. I observed that while this was only a fraction of the whole problem it made a very bad impression. Government had made promises in February 1937 which had

<sup>1</sup> No. 758.

not been carried out a year later. Although he had himself told me that he realized after 'Anschluss' that there was no more time to be lost, nothing effective had been done in regard to these appointments by the time of Lord Runciman's arrival and in the four weeks of his stay here Lord Runciman had had to make considerable effort to obtain appointment of a few post-masters. No doubt there were difficulties but to say so at this date was really no answer and I did not myself know what reply I could give if failure of Czechoslovak Government in this respect were cited as evidence of insincerity. Dr. Benes admitted mistakes had been made and I suggested to him that a definite programme of appointments should be put into execution at an early date according to a guaranteed time table.<sup>2</sup>

Repeated to Berlin Saving.

<sup>2</sup> On September 5 Mr. Newton was informed that his language in Nos. 758-60 was approved.

### No. 761

*Viscount Chilston (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received September 4, 7.25 p.m.)*

*No. 165 Telegraphic [C 9186/1941/18]*

MOSCOW, September 4, 1938, 5.25 p.m.

Czechoslovak Minister told me yesterday that he had again been assured by M. Litvinov that, in the event of a German attack on Czechoslovakia and of France being engaged, Soviet Government would fulfil their treaty obligations. My Czechoslovak colleague also hinted at the possibility of an understanding between Soviet Union and Roumania for passage of Soviet troops across Roumanian territory. Roumanian Minister however assured me not long ago that anything of the kind was quite out of the question. Finally Czechoslovak Minister told me very confidentially that Soviet Government had suggested to French Government that the latter should raise the question of German menace to Czechoslovakia at the forthcoming meeting of the Council of League of Nations under Article 11 of the Covenant. Personally he deplored this idea as somewhat dangerous.

French Chargé d'Affaires, whom Counsellor saw yesterday, did not confirm this but gave it as his personal view that, should a German invasion of Czechoslovakia (? occur)<sup>1</sup> Soviet Government would probably not intervene until question had been brought up before the Council of the League and a decision reached. He added that at a recent interview M. Litvinov had assured him also that Soviet Government would do their best to help Czechoslovakia in case of need, but had given no indication how they proposed to do this.

Personally, I do not attach very much importance to the somewhat half-hearted assurances which my Czech and French colleagues from time to time extract from M. Litvinov, nor do I share the optimism of Czechoslovak

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.

Minister who seems to believe in effective Soviet intervention in the case of trouble in Central Europe.

I had asked to see M. Litvinov today but had been unable to obtain interview. It seems possible that he leaves for Geneva tomorrow.

Repeated to Berlin, Paris, Prague and Bucharest.

#### No. 762

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 256 Telegraphic [C 9172/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 4, 1938, 10.0 p.m.*

Your telegrams Nos. 502,<sup>1</sup> 506<sup>2</sup> and 507<sup>3</sup> and Paris telegram No. 227.<sup>4</sup>

I presume that you are keeping your French colleague informed and have, if you think it necessary, asked him to speak in same sense to Dr. Benes.

In view of latter's remark that he intends to ask French Government whether he should accept 'Herr Hitler's ultimatum' (see continuation of your telegram No. 506<sup>5</sup>) it seems important that you and your French colleague should speak with one voice.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 752.

<sup>2</sup> No. 758.

<sup>3</sup> No. 760.

<sup>4</sup> No. 733.

<sup>5</sup> No. 759.

#### No. 763

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

*No. 255 Telegraphic [C 9172/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 4, 1938, 10.0 p.m.*

Paris telegram No. 227<sup>1</sup> and Prague telegrams Nos. 502,<sup>2</sup> 506,<sup>3</sup> and 507,<sup>4</sup> and my telegram to Prague No. 256.<sup>5</sup>

Please inform French Government of representations made by His Majesty's Minister to Benes and ask them to authorise French Minister to speak to Dr. Benes in same sense if he and Mr. Newton consider it desirable.

French Minister's language in that case should not be less firm than that already employed by Mr. Newton.

Repeated to Prague and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 733.

<sup>2</sup> No. 752.

<sup>3</sup> No. 758.

<sup>4</sup> No. 760.

<sup>5</sup> No. 762.

No. 764

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 258 [C 9171/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 4, 1938, 10.0 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 506, second part,<sup>1</sup> third paragraph.

I see no objection to the suggestion that an agreed communiqué should be issued. On the contrary, I think such a communiqué might be extremely useful particularly if issued before the first speeches at Nuremberg on September 6. Subject to the account of the Hitler-Henlein interview, which I have not yet seen, I would suggest for Lord Runciman's consideration that he might care to issue on his own accord a communiqué of the sort contemplated if it should prove impossible to reach an agreed communiqué.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 759.

No. 765

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 5, 9.30 a.m.)*

*No. 509 Telegraphic [C 9182/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, *September 4, 1938, 11.20 p.m.*

Following from Ashton-Gwatkin for Strang.

I saw Herr Henlein this morning September 4 in his home at Asch.

He told me that he had arrived at Berchtesgaden on Thursday about mid-day and had seen Herr Hitler alone for a short time in the course of the afternoon. He gave two messages in writing to Herr Hitler who said he would discuss them next day.

Field-Marshal Göring had left Berchtesgaden that morning. Dr. Goebbels was there but was not present at the interview.

Next morning, Friday, Herr Henlein had a second interview with Herr Hitler at which Herr von Ribbentrop was present but did not say anything.

Herr Hitler's manner was calm and friendly and he seemed in good health. He did not discuss Anglo-German relations. He accepted Herr Henlein's commendation of the work of Lord Runciman's mission. He asked Herr Henlein what his policy was. Herr Henlein said first of all that he wanted no war. Herr Hitler said 'I do not want war'. Herr Henlein said that there were two policies for him: (a) autonomy within Czechoslovakia State to be attained. Secondly (b) plebiscite which means solidification with the Reich. In either case he wished to obtain his results in a peaceable way and to this Herr Hitler fully assented.

Herr Henlein said that he preferred policy (a) and hoped to attain his results thereby. Herr Hitler expressed great scepticism. Herr Henlein then had lunch with Herr Hitler and Herr von Ribbentrop.

Herr Henlein was in a very cheerful mood and clearly relieved at the result of his visit.

I attached as much importance to this as to anything he told me especially when he asked me not to impart too rosy an account of it to Czechoslovak authorities, as it might encourage them to resist his requests. Herr Henlein seemed quite convinced of Herr Hitler's pacific intentions.

I asked him twice whether Herr Hitler had fixed or suggested any date by which results must be communicated. He said 'no'. I learned from Herr Henlein that party was going to hold its own great Parteitag for first time about October 15 or October 16 at Böhmisches-Leipa. It would be necessary for him to make a big speech at the Parteitag and be able to announce that all had been satisfactorily arranged. He thought that latest date by which agreement should be reached was the end of September.

Repeated to Berlin. Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

#### No. 766

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 5)*  
*No. 431 Saving: Telegraphic [C 9175/65/18]*

BERLIN, September 4, 1938

Military Attaché saw today Head of Attaché Gruppe of German War Office. The latter, while again frankly regretting the scope and scale of German military measures at this critical juncture, considered that the general situation now appeared slightly easier. He had recently been present at an interview between 'the Ambassador of the great and friendly Power'<sup>1</sup> and Generaloberst von Brauchitsch. The Ambassador had been most sceptical as to Germany's intention to endeavour to preserve peace, but he had been assured by the Commander-in-Chief that he was most hopeful of a peaceful solution to the Sudeten question if only the eight Karlsbad points were accepted as a basis for negotiation. Head of Attaché Gruppe refused to add anything to his previous statements regarding the nature of the military measures now in progress. He declined to give any details and would give no assurance as to when any of the Reserve Formations already embodied would be discharged. He explained that as the operation was being carried out for the first time it might be necessary to keep Reserves with the colours for longer than originally intended. He indicated that it was intended in certain cases to carry out exercises within active Divisions and then to form and train the Reserve units belonging to these Divisions with the help of a nucleus of active personnel. When questioned as to the reported intention to retain men with the colours beyond the normal date this autumn the Head of the Attaché Gruppe prefaced his reply by saying it was almost too much to hope that the Military Attaché would believe him. The fact however was that the date for discharging men from the colours was not a fixed one and that it varied from year to year. It was necessary

<sup>1</sup> i.e. Italy.

this year to make the date a late one owing to the exceptionally big harvest which had entailed the employment of much military labour to make up for the normal labour which had been diverted to other objects. Military Attaché believes that dates for discharge of second year men have now been fixed provisionally between October 24 and 29.

Please inform War Office.

No. 767

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 5)*

*No. 432 Saving: Telegraphic [C 9174/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 4, 1938

While there is a slight temporary *détente* as result of Herr Henlein's visit to Berchtesgaden and of British pressure at Prague I would estimate position here as fundamentally the same as when I left Berlin a week ago.

Put as briefly as possible I conceive it as follows:—

Herr Hitler has decided that there must be a solution of the Sudeten question in course of next few weeks.

Preparedness of his army is a trump card in his hand but he has not yet decided whether it is to be used or merely displayed. If he cannot achieve by its mere display an important diplomatic success to counterbalance his rebuff of May 21 last he is probably prepared to resort to military force. If he does so it will be because he believes that France cannot afford Czechoslovakia effective help and that Great Britain will not intervene unless France is attacked. He will consequently refrain from attacking France. If attacked by France he will represent it as a French aggression.

Looked at from German angle I regard estimate of position as described by Count Csaky after Horthy visit in Budapest telegram No. 105,<sup>1</sup> as essentially accurate. I particularly agree that all depends on how we handle Herr Hitler in the immediate future.

I do not believe that Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden can have said less to Herr Henlein than that he must abide by Karlsbad programme and I am convinced that peace cannot now be ensured on less than that basis. Herr Hitler after May 21 will never agree to less though he may demand more and in this respect every twenty-four hours which pass are a day lost.

In my telegram No. 415 Saving<sup>2</sup> of August 25 I mentioned three alternatives which might be open to Herr Hitler at Nuremberg. (It is generally believed that he will make big political speech on last day, i.e. September 12.)

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram of September 2 reported Count Csaky's view that Herr Hitler was determined to regain the prestige which he had lost in the crisis of the previous May, and that the chances of avoiding war depended 'upon how Herr Hitler was handled in the immediate future by Great Britain and France'. Count Csaky said he 'had good reason to believe' that Italy had given Germany a definite pledge that she would immediately join in the conflict on Germany's side. He further said that he 'knew' that Signor Mussolini was urging Herr Hitler to resort to force.

<sup>2</sup> No. 689.



Prophecy is more than usually dangerous with an irresponsible individual such as Herr Hitler who is moreover particularly addicted to surprises. But what I fear is that if before that date Dr. Benes has not declared his readiness to negotiate on basis of Karlsbad programme or something very equivalent to it, Herr Hitler will announce that in view of British failure to overcome Czech ill faith he will now recognise no solution except a plebiscite based on right of self-determination. He need not make it an immediate *casus belli*. Even without that such a declaration would obviously put Lord Runciman and ourselves in an awkward position and it has always seemed curious to me that the plebiscite issue has not been hitherto more publicly stressed in German press and speeches. It is as if it were being reserved for the Führer.

I drew attention of Czech Minister here to this danger yesterday but . . .<sup>3</sup> Even if we imposed thereafter under a definite threat of war—and nothing less would suffice—some other solution it would merely mean another Pyrrhic victory which would leave the abscess to form again until such time as Germany would regard the moment opportune to cut it with the sword.

Repeated to Prague.

<sup>3</sup> A personal reference is here omitted.

## No. 768

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 6)*

*No. 567 Saving: Telegraphic [C 9287/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 4, 1938

My telegram No. 563 Saving.<sup>1</sup>

M. Léger hears that the most violent of all the Nazis is now Herr von Ribbentrop, who is pushing for extreme action against Czechoslovakia, being convinced that France would at most mobilize without acting and that Great Britain would do nothing at all. Nazi agents have recently been sent to the United Kingdom in order to feel the British pulse and report what are believed to be the feeble beats thereof. Herr von Ribbentrop withholds from the Führer any information indicative of the slightest suspicion of British firmness.

M. Léger, on the other hand, says that a curious change has come over the Italians in the last five or six days. Previous to that they were egging on the Germans, whereas now they are adopting a more cautious policy. He thinks they may have counted upon France being left in the lurch by Great Britain and may have hoped to share in some French spoils in the Mediterranean, whereas now they may believe that German aggression would entail

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram reported a statement by M. Léger on the French action with regard to counter-measures taken by them to meet German concentrations. The German military attaché in Paris had been informed of these measures and of the reason for them. M. Léger stated General Gamelin's confidence in his ability 'not only to contain the Germans, but to wear them down by a system of carefully executed offensives', and also to deal with Italy.

a general conflagration in which they would be involved from the outset, with doubtful results.

M. Léger, whose sympathies are anything but pro-Franco, realises only too well that it would be madness to open the Pyrenees frontier in present dangerous conditions in Central Europe, and thereby to goad Mussolini to some desperate act. All this he volunteered without the slightest prompting from me. His idea would be on the contrary to try and obtain certain assurances from Franco in return for the continued closing of that frontier. Internal French politics may render this somewhat difficult, but not impossible, for M. Blum has learned sufficient wisdom from his two Ministerial innings and is sufficiently impressed with the German danger to avoid opposing with too inconvenient vigour the Government's policy over Spain and the 40-hour week.

M. Léger is pleased with the recent action of the Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs in informing M. Krofta and M. Litvinov that Roumania would allow Russian aeroplanes to fly over Roumania to the help of Czechoslovakia.

#### No. 769

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 6)*

*No. 568 Saving: Telegraphic [C 9291/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 4, 1938

My immediately preceding Saving telegram.<sup>1</sup>

I took the opportunity of this long and friendly talk, that lasted three hours, to tackle M. Léger on the vexed question of Czechoslovakia's future Treaty relations with France and Russia (see Mr. Campbell's telegram No. 505 Saving).<sup>2</sup>

My distinct impression is that we shall not succeed in inducing the French to formulate any counter-proposals on this subject until the present crisis is past.

M. Léger said that no French politician would be willing to leave on record that he had consented to discuss so delicate a matter in present circumstances.

None of my arguments in favour of the importance of not letting ourselves be taken by surprise if and when this question is publicly raised by Hitler had any effect. M. Léger said that if a catastrophe were now avoided and general negotiations with Germany were begun, the French Government would be ready at very short notice to inform us of their considered views on the future relations of Czechoslovakia with foreign Powers. I expressed disappointment at this attitude, and the hope that at least the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, even though they might be unwilling to put anything on paper at the present juncture, would do some hard thinking on this problem, so that no time should be wasted when it was sprung upon us. M. Léger promised that French suggestions would then be quickly formulated.

<sup>1</sup> No. 768.

<sup>2</sup> No. 601.

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 8)*  
*No. 932 [C 9370/65/18]*

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *September 4, 1938*

My Lord,

With reference to my despatch No. 867<sup>1</sup> of August 17th, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith in original a further report which has been addressed to me by my Military Attaché regarding the scope of the military measures being taken at the present time in Germany.

I have, &c.,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

<sup>1</sup> No. 635.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 770

BERLIN, *September 4, 1938*

Sir,

I have the honour to report that it is still impossible locally to obtain accurate information regarding the scope of the military measures now being taken in Germany. The German War Office decline absolutely to comply with any request for details, and it is only possible to endeavour to arrive at certain deductions from information and indications from a variety of unofficial sources.

2. Such information as has come to hand confirms the opinion held by most local observers. This is broadly as follows.

(a) The calling up of Reservists began on about August 15th.

(b) It is certain that a proportion at least of active Divisions are being brought up to a war footing.

(c) It also seems probable that up to seven Reserve Divisions have by now been formed. Three of these are almost certainly located at Gross Born, Jüterbog and Döberitz respectively.

(d) It is generally agreed that the calling up of Reservists is taking place in three stages. The first group has already been called up; the second, and I believe a more important group, is expected to join the colours this week; and the third will probably be called up about the middle of this month.

(e) It is understood by many competent observers that by the end of this month there may be as many as twenty-one Reserve Divisions in being, each stage of embodiment having comprised seven Divisions. I am frankly unable to confirm this, but according to calculations from available data there should be sufficient armament in the country to equip approximately this number of Reserve Divisions, in addition to Landwehr Divisions.

(f) It is generally held—and the German War Office have given no indication to the contrary—that there is little likelihood of any Reservists being discharged so long as the Sudeten crisis continues, at any rate prior to

the onset of winter weather and certainly not before the next annual class of recruits join the colours.

(g) It is also clear, and has been confirmed by the German War Office, that the date for discharging at any rate a large proportion of the second year men from the Army has been postponed till near the end of October.

3. Such scanty information as has been obtainable appears to indicate that some at any rate of the Reserve units now in being are armed with weapons which are not of the latest type. I have no information of Reserve units with modern armament on the same scale as the active Army. It is clear that some of the Reserve units and Formations hitherto incorporated include at least a proportion of Landwehr. The second group of Reservists which I believe are being incorporated this week are more probably Reservists of the first class. I know of three young men who were called up yesterday, and who only recently completed their two years service in the Army.

4. In arriving at some estimate of the scale on which the present 'partial mobilisation' is taking place, one must be guided to a certain extent by the repercussions which this operation is evoking in public opinion. The apprehension aroused by the military measures now being carried out—and in this connection the extent and the speed of the work being done on the Western fortifications must not be forgotten—is so marked and so widespread that one is forced to the conclusion that in one way or another the partial mobilisation must be affecting a large proportion of the country. Furthermore German Staff Officers, obviously perturbed at the possibility of war, have done their best on more than one occasion to impress upon me the dangers of the situation, and to stress the fact that in their opinion the present military programme for the autumn was to be heartily deplored. In spite of the fact that, doubtless in accordance with instructions, they have in some cases endeavoured to minimise what is afoot and to keep me in the dark over details, I cannot but feel that the partial mobilisation must be on a very considerable scale to warrant the undoubtedly grave view which they hold of it and its possible consequences.

5. Up to date there appears to be no evidence of anything in the nature of a concentration against Czechoslovakia having commenced. I have no information of any Formations having been moved into areas which might indicate any immediate intention to deliver an attack.

6. There has been considerable movement in Bavaria and from Bavaria into Austria, but in the latter case a fair proportion seems to have been convoys of armament and munitions of all kinds.

7. News from Silesia and from Austria is scarce, and it is in these two areas that we might anticipate seeing the first signs of any serious intention to concentrate for action. There is still no military evidence to show that such an intention exists.

8. A considerable number of troops are now concentrating at Nuremberg for the Partei Tag. Troops at Nuremberg or at Grafenwöhr are within striking distance of the Hof-Eger gap into Czechoslovakia, and it is always possible that under cover of Partei Tag preparations an abnormal number

of troops might be moved into this area. I mention this as a possibility which we cannot exclude, although I consider it a doubtful one, especially in view of the difficulty of maintaining a large force on this route through the frontier hills.

9. I feel it my duty to point out the definite possibility that the military measures now in full swing may well assume a scope even greater than the original estimates which I formed. There is sufficient evidence of apprehension both in civil and military circles to warrant this assumption, quite apart from any direct evidence which is singularly scanty. On the other hand, as I have pointed out in Your Excellency's telegram No. 431 [Saving]<sup>1</sup> of September 4th, there seems to be a genuine hope in the High Command that the military machine will not be set in motion against the Czechs if the eight Carlsbad points are agreed upon as a basis for negotiation.

10. Whether the internal situation, both economic and financial, within Germany, may force Herr Hitler to take advantage of the Sudeten problem to force a war upon the Czechs in spite of anything that may be done to meet the Sudetens' claims, is another and at the moment apparently a very real question. Such a possibility seems to be genuinely apprehended by so many responsible people in the country that we must at least take it into serious account. What Hitler may wish to do, and what the economic strain and his Party extremists may force him to do are quite different matters.

I have, &c.,

F. N. MASON-MACFARLANE  
*Colonel, Military Attaché.*

<sup>1</sup> No. 766.

#### No. 771

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson to Viscount Halifax*  
[C 11048/1941/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *September 4, 1938*

Dear Secretary of State,

What did Hitler say to Henlein? That is the question. Anyway not less than the Karlsbad programme and I wonder if that is now going to suffice. In the end Benes seems cast to play the same rôle as Schuschnigg and will end by doing incalculable harm to his country and possibly to all of us.

Apprehension of war is very great here in all classes except among certain Nazi Party leaders. From information from a variety of sources and from opinions expressed by his more reliable colleagues my Military Attaché considers that the greatest danger at the moment lies in the discontented feeling in the country generally and in the recent rapid deterioration in the financial and economic situation. He has frequently heard the view expressed that things are so bad that Hitler may be forced to make war to distract attention from the parlous state into which he has led the country. 'An end of horror is always better than a horror without end.' That is a German quotation.

Yet let us make no mistake. If Hitler gives the word the whole nation will rush to war and the young men will die for the 'Fatherland' however much the old ones grumble in the back areas. I can well believe that Germany could not last more than a certain number of months but the harm would be done. I also believe the Czechs would collapse much quicker than people think, after the first week or two. Except for aeroplanes, British and French support would be scarcely visible and that would discourage them. Germany, realising her inability to make a long war, would occupy the Sudeten areas and propose peace on the basis of their retention and a guarantee of what was left of Czechoslovakia. Could we go on fighting to restore those areas to Czech rule? And what would Benes have gained by his obstinacy?

My own conviction is that only direct compulsion (which will save his face with his people) will ever induce Benes to see realities. The longer his hesitation the greater the humiliation.

It has occurred to me that a possible way out of a deadlock if Runciman reaches one might be for His Majesty's Government to come out, at his or your own suggestion, with a proposal for a revision of the Versailles Treaty on the basis of Article 19 of the Covenant. As the League itself would not be available or practical since the country most interested, i.e. Germany, is no longer a member of the League, His Majesty's Government might propose to confine negotiations to Great Britain-France, Italy-Germany, and Czechoslovakia. The advantage of the proposal would be that it would exclude Russia, as not being a signatory of Versailles. Poland and Hungary as interested parties might be invited as observers though if possible the Conference should be limited to the four Great Powers and the 'corpus delicti'.

The proposal would put negotiations back into the purely diplomatic field.

Yours ever,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

If you make your speech on Monday my view is that since we have already publicly warned Hitler several times, the less you insist on that aspect of the case the better. Apart from Hitler's tender spot, there is the 'Wolf, wolf' theory.

N. H.

No. 772

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson to Sir A. Cadogan*  
[C 9380/1941/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, September 4, 1938

It may be true, as stated by Count Csaky to Gascoigne at Budapest<sup>1</sup> after accompanying Horthy to Berlin, that Mussolini is urging Hitler on to direct action against Czechoslovakia, but it is certainly not confirmed by the

<sup>1</sup> See No. 767, note 1.

attitude here of the Italian Ambassador. He is wholeheartedly in favour of a peaceful solution, that I guarantee.

He was very insistent the other day on the desirability of Perth's early return to Rome and I agree that there is a good deal to be said for it. I do not feel that we can afford to leave anything to chance and Italy's attitude might be decisive for Hitler, if he is bent on war or is really contemplating making it. For this reason I regard it as a tragic pity that we cannot ratify the Italian Agreement at once. Might it still not be possible if we could persuade Franco to accept the British plan? Might not the Italians even help to persuade him to do so, in return say for ratification after acceptance, and recognition of belligerent rights after the repatriation of the first X thousand volunteers?

It is more and more brought home to me—not that I did not always appreciate it—how unfortunate was the public interpretation of our action here on May 21st. I imagine that it is too late now to rectify it but in any public speech it must be borne in mind that it was resented especially by Hitler on the following main grounds: it was given the appearance of an ultimatum, it encouraged Prague in resistance, it abused the gravity of the situation without reason and it attributed to Germany an action which she did not take and an intention which Hitler did not have.

I did my best on September 1st to disabuse Ribbentrop of his conviction that Great Britain will never in any circumstances go to war for the Czechs. I hope you agreed with the language I used to him and Weizsäcker. If not will you let me know as I may, though it is unlikely, get an opportunity of speaking to Herr Hitler at Nuremberg, even if it is only at the diplomatic reception. Or if there is any other particular point you would like me to make please let me know before Tuesday night (September 6th) when I leave Berlin for Nuremberg. My general line would be roughly that the reaction against the growing distrust of Germany in England would be German co-operation in a peaceful solution of the Sudeten question: that this is the Prime Minister's and Lord Halifax's settled policy in order that the way might later be clear for a real Anglo-German understanding. I should not stress it in a sense to make Hitler believe that we were bribing him to meet us half way over the Sudeten, but as the assertion of a simple fact.

Yours ever,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

The issue as I see it is this:—Either the Karlsbad programme and a State of Nationalities or (a) a Plebiscite or (b) a war after which C.S. could never be reconstituted as it is today.

N. H.

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 5, 12.30 p.m.)*  
*No. 511 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9202/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 5, 1938

Following from Ashton-Gwatkin for Strang.

Prime Minister proposes to issue statement this evening for publication in tomorrow morning's press.

He will say that Czechoslovak Government are making new proposals in which they will offer genuine and immediate self-government to Sudeten Germans on a new basis. General idea of proposals will be published but not a detailed scheme. I understand but do not yet know for certain that proposals will be on the same general lines as those contained in Mr. Newton's telegram No. 505.<sup>1</sup>

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 756.

No. 774

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 5, 5.20 p.m.)*  
*No. 410 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9212/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 5, 1938

Yugoslav Minister came to see me today on his return from Bled and on instructions from the Prince Regent to ask what the position of His Majesty's Government was in Sudeten question. My reply was roughly 'To do everything possible to preserve peace' but that our action must eventually depend on whether it was Herr Hitler or M. Benes who proved unreasonable, on French attitude and on eventual recommendations of Lord Runciman.

Yugoslav Minister said that Yugoslavian Prime Minister had been very outspoken to Czechoslovakian Minister for Foreign Affairs at Bled conference but that M. Benes . . . .<sup>1</sup>

Yugoslav Minister asked what British attitude would be towards a plebiscite which he said that his country would welcome. I pointed out dangers and undesirability of such a solution and observed that my belief that Herr Hitler still desired peaceful solution was partly based on fact that plebiscite had not yet been publicly demanded by Germany inasmuch as she realised that Czechs would fight rather than accept it.

Minister told me Prince Regent was very anxious and pessimistic; his one idea was to follow lead of His Majesty's Government but he did not see what Yugoslavia could possibly do if she was cut off by Italy in conjunction with Germany from western assistance.

Repeated to Prague and Belgrade.

<sup>1</sup> A personal reference is here omitted.



*Sir G. Warner (Berne) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 5, 7.30 p.m.)*  
*No. 29 Telegraphic [C 9264/1941/18]*

BERNE, September 5, 1938, 5.45 p.m.

Important informant<sup>1</sup> just arrived from Germany and who asked that his name should not be mentioned tells me he heard from highly placed personages (one at Berlin) that Herr Hitler has decided to attack Czechoslovakia in about six weeks. No leave will be given to members of party after Nuremberg. After stormy interview with Herr Hitler General Beck resigned as he declined to participate in attack on friendly state. Herr Hitler means to make so overwhelming attack on Czechoslovakia that England and France will not dare to intervene. Report of General Staff on the prospects of successful war was of a neutral character. Personage at Berlin who was in despair said that only hope of peace is for Prime Minister to send a letter through intermediary to Herr Hitler beginning with remarks calculated to please him such as reference to his desire for a peaceful settlement but ending by saying that if Czechoslovakia were attacked England would support her with all forces at her command.

It is of course essential that nothing should be said which might compromise informants.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix IV.

## No. 776

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 5, 5.50 p.m.)*  
*No. 411 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9213/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 5, 1938

Czechoslovakia.

Though I have not yet received Prague telegrams Nos. 506 and 507<sup>1</sup> I learn through Italian Ambassador that Herr Henlein left Berchtesgaden with new counter-proposals, some for immediate realisation and some for realisation later. I understand it was on Herr von Ribbentrop's advice that demands were separated into two categories.

According to Italian Ambassador the influence was growing . . .<sup>2</sup> people here who were urging Hitler to use force himself on the ground that Benes will never yield to anything else and that British Government would not exercise enough pressure at Prague to make him yield. He did not believe Hitler had yet finally decided what to do but he did believe if there was further delay he would present definite ultimatum. The Ambassador showed extreme anxiety and depression.

While there are number of considerations which are influencing Hitler in

<sup>1</sup> Nos. 758-60.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

the sense of forcible action by Germany herself, such as personal prestige as set off against rebuff of May 21, conviction that Benes will never agree to any radical solution, internal dissatisfaction with régime which needs counter-irritant, deteriorating economic condition of Germany, ambition of individual party leaders for personal triumphs, etc., I personally doubt whether they will overcome Hitler's own love for peace, dislike of dead Germans and hesitation of risking his régime on a gambler's throw provided eventual solution can be represented as diplomatic victory for himself and that he be regarded as the man who preserved European peace on terms genuinely satisfactory to his fellow countrymen across the frontier.

I also feel that if Benes continues to refuse to go far enough most probably the next step will be insistence on full self-determination to be expressed by a plebiscite.

If this is refused, the question of German resort to force will become finally acute. Moreover as time is short (German partial mobilization will reach its peak towards the middle of September) stage two (i.e. plebiscite) may well be omitted or rather be included in definite ultimatum which would presumably coincide with peak of military preparedness for all eventualities.

Prague telegrams above mentioned have now just reached me but they will take some time to decypher.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

#### No. 777

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 5, 7.30 p.m.)  
No. 512 Telegraphic [C 9217/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 5, 1938, 5.55 p.m.

My telegram No. 509.<sup>1</sup>

Following from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin for Mr. Strang:

I should add that Prince Max von Hohenlohe who was with me put favourable, indeed optimistic, interpretation on (a) Henlein's evident satisfaction at his visit, (b) fact that Herr Hitler indicated no time limit, (c) (? suppression of)<sup>2</sup> Frank. He interprets (a) as an endorsement of Henlein's policy of peaceful appeal, (b) as indication that however loud thunder there may be in Nuremberg speech there will be no lightning, and (c) as evidence that no extremist candidate is being run against Henlein.

He said that Henlein's account of interview came as great relief to him.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 765.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 261 Telegraphic [C 9182/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 5, 1938, 7.0 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 509.<sup>1</sup>

Following for Lord Runciman.

1. I shall be grateful to receive from you at your earliest convenience an appreciation of the situation and prospects as you now see them in the light of the account you have received of Herr Henlein's interview with Herr Hitler.

2. It would be useful for me to know what prospects there are of the resumption of direct negotiations between Herr Kundt and Dr. Benes on the lines of your telegram No. 504.<sup>2</sup> More particularly, do you foresee an early agreement as to a compromise on the lines suggested in the last paragraph of that telegram? Have you any idea of what Herr Kundt had in mind when he spoke of a compromise being possible?

3. As the Nuremberg Parteitag has now started the question of time becomes of the highest importance, and you will no doubt have in mind the importance of some sort of concrete step being taken, either by the negotiators or by yourself registering definite advance, before Hitler makes his final speech, probably on September 12. Nor will you overlook a consideration that is very present to our minds, namely that if some such definite advance promising prospect of peaceful solution can be made public, it may have great value in strengthening hands of moderate opinion in Germany and so influencing final decision. It would be unwise to work on the assumption that it will be time enough if a decision is taken before the Sudeten Parteitag in October.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 765.

<sup>2</sup> No. 755.

No. 779

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 5, 7.20 p.m.)*

*No. 413 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9215/1941/18]*

BERLIN, *September 5, 1938*

Prague telegrams 506<sup>1</sup> and 507.<sup>2</sup>

Events of last four months and immediate imminence of danger of war do not seem to have made much impression on M. Benes who continues to use same language as he did four months ago or according to Sir C. Bentinck, who saw him recently, the same as when he was Minister in Prague two years ago.

<sup>1</sup> No. 758.

<sup>2</sup> No. 760.

The eleventh hour will soon pass and once again the market is a rising one. It may be taken for granted that Herr Hitler's terms will stiffen if his present offer (which at least contemplates peace and not war) is substantially whittled down by Czechoslovak Government. Past few years is strewn with examples of similar missed opportunities.

My most earnest advice is that the Hitler-Henlein terms, if in any way equitable, should be accepted sufficiently promptly and unconditionally to prevent giving Herr Hitler opportunity of going back on them.

This recommendation has still greater force if view is correct, though personally I do not yet share it, that Herr Hitler has already decided on use of force in any case.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

### No. 780

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 6, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 513 Telegraphic [C 9260/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 5, 1938, 8.46 p.m.

Berlin telegram No. 405<sup>1</sup> paragraph 6.

I regard it as a hopeful sign both for the present and future that the German Minister for Foreign Affairs should have hinted that some impartial tribunal would be required as guarantee that any scheme put forward were effective and loyally executed. Point has been present in minds of Mission and is one to which I drew attention in my telegram No. 304<sup>2</sup> of June 21. Since then I am further confirmed in my view that some such body will be essential to deal with charges that are bound to be made on both sides both in good and bad faith that any agreement reached is not being carried out.

Appointment of such a body should moreover go some way to meet Dr. Benes' objection that by accepting Karlsbad points he would be signing a blank cheque (my telegram No. 506<sup>3</sup> 3rd paragraph).

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 738.

<sup>2</sup> No. 431 in Volume I of this Series.

<sup>3</sup> No. 758.

### No. 781

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 6)*  
*No. 570 Saving: Telegraphic [C 9268/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 5, 1938

Your telegram No. 255.<sup>1</sup>

I informed Minister for Foreign Affairs this afternoon of Mr. Newton's conversation with M. Benes and begged that French Minister at Prague might take similar action.

<sup>1</sup> No. 763.

French Government had already received last night a telegram from the French Minister saying he had been summoned urgently by M. Benes, who had seemed very much upset after his conversation with Mr. Newton. On receipt of this telegram M. Corbin was asked to enquire of the Foreign Office the scope of Mr. Newton's *démarche*.

I urged M. Bonnet to instruct French Minister to use similar language to M. Benes without delay, but His Excellency feels unable to tell M. de Lacroix to make the same . . .<sup>2</sup> Karlsbad programme as his British colleague. He will, however, instruct him to urge M. Benes again to make all possible concessions and in particular to issue an agreed communiqué with Sudeten representatives recording view that both parties are making real progress in their negotiations.

M. Bonnet, since receiving from M. Corbin an account of Hitler-Henlein interview, takes a more hopeful view of situation, but he still feels it absolutely essential that Herr Hitler should realize that if he employs force France will stand by Czechoslovakia and that a general conflagration would ensue. He feels the last word will be with Lord Runciman and repeated that whatever the latter's verdict might be French Government would accept it.

Repeated to Prague and Berlin.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

#### No. 782

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

No. 2002 [C 9218/1941/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 5, 1938

Sir,

The French Ambassador called to see me this morning and began by asking me whether we had any information concerning the interview of Herr Henlein with Herr Hitler. It so happened that Mr. Newton's telegram No. 509<sup>1</sup> came in while I was speaking to the Ambassador and I read it to him. I told him that we would let him have the information it contained in more convenient form later.

2. At the outset of our conversation the Ambassador referred to what his Government imagined to be the German state of mind at the moment. There appeared to be a general suggestion in Berlin that everything was going to be all right and that there was no danger of war. But this feeling, if it existed, prompted the question of what might be the basis on which such relief from anxiety might be based. Was it to be on the footing of some compromise between the respective points of view, or was all concession to come from the Czechoslovak side? The reports that had reached the French Government of the Hungarian visit had appeared to show that considerable anxiety had been left in the Hungarian mind by the atmosphere they found in Berlin, and Herr von Ribbentrop had been thought to be exercising very

<sup>1</sup> No. 765.

unhelpful influence. It also seemed possible from their information that Italy was not giving wise counsel. The French Government also feared that the effect of the Lanark speech might be wearing off.

3. These speculations, as the Ambassador recognised them to be, were, of course, not disconnected with the aspect of affairs as they saw it from the Czechoslovak end. The French Government were slightly puzzled by the sequence of events. We had first of all asked them to join with us in exerting pressure on Dr. Benes, which at the time, so they understood, Lord Runciman did not, in fact, consider necessary. For some reason which was not plain to them there had been a change of attitude on the part of both Lord Runciman and Mr. Newton, which had led to Mr. Newton's very frank conversation with Dr. Benes on Saturday. In the French view the Czech Government had come a very long way, but there had not been much sign of compromise at present from the Sudetendeutsch side. Meanwhile, the German attitude seemed to be to rely very much on the false analogy of Ireland, an analogy devised, no doubt, to impress English opinion. The French Government, while feeling that it was necessary for Dr. Benes to show complete good faith and make proposals with complete sincerity in the sense of great concessions and autonomy, were bound to rely entirely upon Lord Runciman's spirit of impartiality and justice to see that the Czech Government were not forced into an impossible position. This might yet be the issue if concessions were wholly one-sided and were not met by a genuine spirit of constructive co-operation on the other.

4. In reply to M. Corbin, I said that we also, if I remembered the telegrams right, had been somewhat puzzled by the change of attitude at Prague which had eventuated in Mr. Newton's frank talk with Dr. Benes on Saturday. We, not less than the French Government, felt it very difficult to express an opinion about the details of any proposals made in Prague and, like them, felt that the only possible course was to trust Lord Runciman's appreciation of the position from day to day and give him all the support that we could. I fully recognised the necessity of doing all we could to hold a rough balance in our pressure at the two ends of the scale and the danger of allowing the German end to feel that the only way of solution was by complete surrender at the other end. I thought much would depend upon the results of the Henlein-Hitler interview when we had had time to give these detailed examination. I had been considering the possibility of making some speech in public to avoid the danger that he had feared of the Chancellor's speech at Lanark being overlaid and forgotten. I was, however, disposed to be very doubtful about the wisdom of this in present circumstances, and the Ambassador agreed with me that public warnings were by no means certain to have a good effect as we would desire. It was no doubt very difficult for Herr Hitler to adopt a moderate course if this had the appearance of being imposed upon him by outside pressure. The Ambassador thought, however, that there might be a good deal to be said for a private repetition at the appropriate moment of a plain warning to Herr Hitler, because it seemed from the report that had reached the French Government of Sir N. Hender-

son's interview with Baron von Weizsäcker that Herr von Ribbentrop was certainly not to be relied upon to transmit any unpleasant representations made to him. I told his Excellency that what he had said was very much in our minds and we must continue to watch the situation in case it should appear opportune to do something on that line. The Ambassador expressed the view that, however clear the situation might be to us, it was not necessarily certain that it was equally clear to Herr Hitler, for all people tended to reach decisions by a process of instinctive reasoning that might be faulty and from which they could only be shaken by very plain speech.

I am, &c.,

HALIFAX

No. 783

*Letter from Viscount Runciman to Viscount Halifax*

[C 9746/1941/18]

LORD RUNCIMAN'S MISSION, PRAGUE, *September 5, 1938*

Since we have exchanged so many code messages and telegrams, letters from me—via a slow bag—are scarcely up to date. Perhaps the best that I can do is to tell you that I see Benes every day. So much is this observed that in [*sic*] some Berlin newspapers which we get here speak of the 'Runciman Benes conspiracy'. Yet if I do not see him I shall lose my hold of him. He has been shaken severely by us, and in London by the remarks made to Jan Masaryk. He was told pretty plainly what we thought of his delays by Newton who saw him for an hour yesterday. I think we have done enough of the censure for the present and certainly in the last few days he has done his best to make up for lost time. Yet nothing can excuse his slow movements and dilatory negotiations of the past five months. Nothing can be said in public about this unfortunate defect in his methods and I can only hope that we may have no cause for complaint in future. He resumes his negotiations tomorrow but with a solemn warning given by me and emphasised by Newton on Saturday that if the British people and Government had to choose between Henlein's Carlsbad Eight points and war, there is no doubt as to the decision. He was much upset; and Newton also thought that we had stirred him soundly. He sent for me again yesterday and obviously wanted to make sure that he had got the correct meaning of what I had said. I was emphatic and he bid me good-bye sorrowfully. He is now to proceed—with the warning ringing in his ears.

At the same time we are not giving him away, so that he can make the best possible of his discussions with the Sudetens, a stiff back being essential with them of course up to the last moment. I cannot be sure of an agreement this week but that is what I am working for. The telegrams about Gwatkin's business with Henlein will have shown to you the bearing which dates and speeches have upon the developments here. I have been in touch with Czech

leaders and ministers and found troublesome fellows amongst them whom Hodza and Benes alone can manage. That is an aspect of these affairs which must not be overlooked.

As to other elements in this intense world I can only say that I try to use them, for instance I have just spent a day and a half with the Cardinal Archbishop Kaspar,<sup>1</sup> who has on my instigation sent a strong letter tonight secretly to Benes telling him that in this patriotic Czech Cardinal's view anything is better than war.

It seems to be useless to write you for the situation is subject to such quick changes that we barely know where we are from day to day. This afternoon we are upset by the French communiqué on mobilisation. Tomorrow some fresh news will doubtless emerge from the fog.

As to dates, the Sudetens talk of September 30th as the latest date for an Agreement and October 15th for their contemplated Parteitag. I shall be home, I hope, long before that date but I cannot come yet, although I must confess to being almost exhausted. Insomnia has tired me, but I have now moved my bed to the Legation and I expect to benefit by the change.

Yours ever

W. R.

<sup>1</sup> Cardinal Kaspar, Archbishop of Prague and Primate of Bohemia.

#### No. 784

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*  
*No. 347 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9165/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 6, 1938, 1.0 p.m.*

I am much struck by State Secretary's remark to you reported in the first sentence of your telegram No. 408<sup>1</sup> and by last two sentences of your telegram No. 403.<sup>2</sup> Although I am not in favour of your asking specially for an interview with Hitler at Nuremberg, you may, I suppose, have an opportunity of a conversation with him. In that case I think it would be useful for you to speak on the following lines:—

2. You could begin by repeating to him in such manner as might impress, without provoking resentment, very much what you said to Herr von Weizsäcker, as reported in the first two paragraphs of your telegram No. 403. You could say that you, and you had no doubt His Majesty's Government, had always recognised the urgency of the Sudetendeutsch problem and the vital necessity of meeting it on broad lines. At the same time, you would beg him not to under-estimate the dangers to the general peace of Europe, as made plain in our August memorandum, which must in certain circumstances arise if all efforts for a peaceful solution were to fail.

3. You could proceed to express your conviction that Lord Runciman, whom His Majesty's Government had authorised to proceed to Prague in the hope of assisting a peaceful solution, had in fact convinced those most

<sup>1</sup> No. 748.

<sup>2</sup> No. 736.



closely in touch with him of his determination, in conjunction with the Czechoslovak Government and the Sudetendeutsch leaders, to secure genuine and just solution.

4. You might add that you had noted with satisfaction the account which had reached you of the conversation between Herr Hitler and Herr Henlein, in which Herr Hitler had made it clear that he certainly did not want a European war. This naturally was also the wish of His Majesty's Government and it ought surely, you would suppose, to be possible for British and German co-operation to find its inspiration in this common desire.

5. His Majesty's Government, you felt sure, were earnestly hoping that they might, therefore, count on co-operation of German Government in securing a settlement by negotiation that would both bring early remedy to just grievances of Sudetendeutsch and, at the same time, preserve integrity of Czechoslovak State.

6. You might remind Hitler that it would be a pity to spoil the chance of good relations between our two countries just at the moment when an amicable solution of the Czechoslovak question seems likely to make it possible to talk about general Anglo-German relations.

7. Even if you do not have opportunity of speaking to Hitler, you will no doubt use this kind of language to any other leaders that you may meet at Nuremberg.

Repeated to Prague and Paris.

#### No. 785

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 6, 2.0 p.m.)

*No. 416 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9285/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 6, 1938

Czechoslovakia.

It would be most unfortunate if announcement of French counter-military measures were to encourage Dr. Benes to persevere in his dilatory tactics. And Mr. Newton's telegram No. 506<sup>1</sup> is illuminating in this respect.

Though I am unaware of what passed at Berchtesgaden, Prague telegram No. 512<sup>2</sup> and Henlein's satisfaction with the upshot of his visit is encouraging as proof of fact that Herr Hitler still seeks pacific solution. He has however the habit of going back on his offers if they are not at once accepted. I feel convinced that this will again happen if Dr. Benes cannot be induced to go forthwith to extreme limit now instead of seeking to obtain legalistic alterations of Karlsbad programme. Possible risk to integrity of the State from acceptance *in toto* of that programme is at least preferable to the certainty of losing Sudeten areas as the result of plebiscite (which I presume His Majesty's Government would equally accept in preference to a war) or of war itself even though successful.

<sup>1</sup> No. 758.

<sup>2</sup> No. 777.

Persuaded as I am that there is no time to be lost lest we drift into an impossible situation and that Herr Hitler will never decrease his demands but is extremely likely to increase them, I cannot but submit that in the interest not only of world peace but of ultimate independence of Czechs themselves the moment has come for us and particularly the French Government to give immediate and categorical advice to M. Benes to accept even what the latter describes as Hitler's 'ultimatum'. The real ultimatum will be infinitely less palatable to all concerned.

I realise that M. Benes may be seeking to (? coerce)<sup>3</sup> us to compel him to take our advice both to save his face with his own people as well as to secure subsequent guarantees from us. Nevertheless is it not preferable to insist on our advice being taken rather than to afford Herr Hitler another chance of saying that the world rejected another of his good offers?

When I saw Baron von Neurath on August 26 (see my despatch No. 930<sup>4</sup>) he particularly stressed the inadvisability of Lord Runciman propounding a cut adrift (*sic*, ? cut and dried)<sup>5</sup> scheme of his own (see Prague telegram No. 505<sup>5</sup>). At the time I did not foresee the least possibility of this and said so, with the result that Baron von Neurath did not elaborate the reasons for this emphatic . . .<sup>3</sup> While I appreciate the necessity of a certain amount of detail in the communiqué which is now contemplated (see your telegram No. 258<sup>6</sup> to Prague) it seems to me essential that whatever is issued should have the prior agreement of Herr Henlein as well as M. Benes or if latter is still recalcitrant of Herr Henlein without M. Benes.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>3</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>5</sup> No. 756.

<sup>4</sup> No. 757.

<sup>6</sup> No. 764.

## No. 786

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 6, 5.30 p.m.)*  
*No. 515 Telegraphic [C 9286/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 6, 1938, 3.45 p.m.

Your telegram No. 256.<sup>1</sup>

My French colleague had already spoken to M. Benes (see the penultimate paragraph of my telegram No. 497<sup>2</sup>). I have informed him of the stiff language that I held on September 3 in order that he may bear it in mind in any further conversations he may have with the President or in any other quarters. M. de Lacroix has also been informed by the Runciman mission direct of the latest developments in regard to negotiations.

Italian Legation also asked for information yesterday and were informed by the mission of the general lines of Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin's conversation with Herr Henlein on September 4.

Repeated to Paris Saving.

<sup>1</sup> No. 762.

<sup>2</sup> No. 740.

*Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Lindsay (Washington)*  
*No. 608 Telegraphic [C 9374/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 6, 1938, 5.15 p.m.*

My telegram No. 597.<sup>1</sup>

1. The following summary of recent developments in the Czechoslovak question is for the confidential information of the Secretary of State.

2. From conversations with Sudeten leaders who had visited Hitler, the Runciman Mission learnt on August 28 that the Führer would welcome a visit from Henlein if the latter could show that Lord Runciman intended to help him find a solution on the basis of the Karlsbad points. Henlein himself on the same day expressed to the Mission the hope that His Majesty's Government would recommend to the Czechoslovak Government the adoption of the Karlsbad points as a basis for settlement.

3. While unwilling to sponsor any particular scheme His Majesty's Government considered it important that Hitler should be made aware before the Nuremberg Congress of the progress made by Lord Runciman's Mission and of his anxiety to find a settlement at the earliest possible moment. With their concurrence Lord Runciman on August 31 authorised Henlein to deliver a message to Hitler to the effect that the object of his Mission was to assist both parties to reach a settlement on the basis both of the Karlsbad points and of the new proposals of the Czech Government. As regards the suggestion that His Majesty's Government might intervene Henlein was to explain that they were reluctant to pronounce upon the merits of any particular proposals: both His Majesty's Government and Lord Runciman were, however, very anxious that a settlement should be found at the earliest possible moment. Lord Runciman was making every effort to this end and hoped that Hitler would give approval and support to the continuance of negotiations.

4. Henlein delivered this message on September 1 to Hitler with whom he had a further conversation the following day. According to the account given on September 4 by Henlein to a member of the Runciman Mission, Hitler had accepted Henlein's commendation of the Mission's work. Asked by Hitler what his policy was Henlein had first said that he wanted no war. With this Hitler had agreed. Henlein then said that there were two policies for him: (a) autonomy within the Czechoslovak state; (b) plebiscite which meant unification with the Reich. In either case he wished to obtain his results in a peaceful way and to this Hitler had assented. Henlein said he preferred policy (a) and hoped to obtain his results thereby, but Hitler had expressed some scepticism. Henlein was in a cheerful mood after his visit and seemed convinced of Hitler's pacific intentions. He said Hitler had fixed no date by which results must be communicated but he himself thought that the latest date by which agreement should be reached was end of September.

<sup>1</sup> No. 741.

5. In the meanwhile, Mr. Newton again saw Dr. Benes on September 3 and reminded him in the name of His Majesty's Government of what might be the fate of Czechoslovakia in the event of hostilities. He emphasised that it was vital for Czechoslovakia to offer immediately and without reservation those concessions without which the Sudeten question could not be peacefully solved. His Majesty's Government were not in a position to say whether anything less than the full Karlsbad programme would now suffice but Benes' offer must clearly, His Majesty's Government felt, not recede from his proposals summarised in paragraph 3 of my telegram under reference. Mr. Newton added, as his own interpretation of this message, that the Czechoslovak Government should go forthwith and unreservedly to the limit of concession and added that this limit should not fall short of the Karlsbad points, if settlement could not be obtained otherwise. Benes observed that no one could tell him exactly what the Karlsbad programme meant. If concrete measures were proposed, he could probably accept them but he was averse to signing a blank cheque.

No. 788

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 7, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 516 Telegraphic [C 9301/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 6, 1938, 11.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 261.<sup>1</sup>

Following from Lord Runciman.

The scene has again changed owing to developments indicated in Prague telegram No. 511.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Hodza has now taken over from the President discussions with Herr Kundt in the hope of reviving official negotiations. He has full support of the Cabinet and will ask Kundt this evening or tomorrow whether he accepts the new basis as a foundation for renewed negotiations between Sudeten delegation and a Government delegation. By foundation he means not a rigid plan but a general line capable of development in discussion. See my immediately following telegram. He is fully, indeed anxiously, alive to importance of publicly registering advance before Herr Hitler speaks at Nuremberg. This I think answers the third paragraph of your telegram under reference.

With regard to second paragraph Herr Kundt expressed his idea of compromise in a formula which he gave to me by which unity, sovereignty and integrity of state would be preserved while the furthest compatible degree of self-government is given in sense of . . .<sup>3</sup> New basis is I think a genuine and I hope successful effort to meet this idea.

With regard to first paragraph my account of Henlein-Hitler interview was one of factors which confirmed Dr. Hodza in his decision to press on with

<sup>1</sup> No. 778.

<sup>3</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>2</sup> No. 773.

the new negotiations. Position is still very delicate and still uncertain until it is quite clear that Sudetens have accepted new basis. This basis represents a very great advance, in fact a real self-government. If Sudetens accept it I should say that the way is at last clear to an agreement. The main point will thus be gained though no doubt many subsidiary difficulties—and some of them serious ones—will arise.<sup>4</sup>

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>4</sup> In a further telegram (No. 518 of September 7) Mr. Newton reported: 'It is clear from a conversation which Lord Runciman held with Dr. Benes yesterday afternoon that the latest proposals have cost the latter a very great effort. He said several times that they amounted to capitulation and would in future years be regretted by Great Britain and France.'

### No. 789

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 7, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 517 Telegraphic [C 9323/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 6, 1938, 11.0 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

Following from Lord Runciman:—

New proposals which have emerged from President, privately discussed with Kundt and Sebekovsky, envisage self-administration on a territorial basis, i.e. a Gau or Cantonal system having control of all affairs which need not be unconditionally reserved to the State itself on the grounds of State unity, and also protection for national minorities by means of 'Curiae' in common representative bodies of Gau. Nationality shall be established through national registers. For dealing with affairs concerning individual nationalities special departments shall be set up in Central Government offices and shall be staffed by officials of nationalities concerned. Proportionality to be observed as regards State employees and as regards financing public works and government orders. Language equality recognised in a spirit of suitability and practicability. This is of course merely an abstract. Fuller text has now been communicated but has not yet been fully studied. Dr. Hodza has explained to us that the new proposals do not exclude other subjects which may be raised by Sudetens. Proposals are merely a basis or foundation for further developments. Dr. Hodza has also explained to us that if Germans so desire administration of three German Gaus might be united by some kind of committee which would give a form of unity to the whole national area and thus provide a single self-government for over two million Germans.

He believes that these new proposals meet Karlsbad eight points in a practical way and to a very great extent.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 788.

No. 790

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 7)*

*No. 572 Saving: Telegraphic [C 9288/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 6, 1938

Whilst I was with Minister for Foreign Affairs this afternoon Berlin telegram No. 416<sup>1</sup> was brought to me, so I read it out to M. Bonnet, who expressed general agreement.

His Excellency is strongly of opinion that every effort must be made to reach an arrangement with Henlein, who, as would appear from his interview with the Führer, desires the Sudeten areas to remain in Czechoslovakia and does not desire a plebiscite, which would render that solution impossible.

I urged strongly that we must therefore do all we can to render things easy for Henlein, and that for that purpose the necessary pressure must be kept up on M. Benes. I begged that the French Minister at Prague might be instructed to keep in the closest touch with Mr. Newton and support the latter's representations to M. Benes whenever it seemed advisable. M. Bonnet promised this should be done.

His Excellency seems rather more hopeful today.

Repeated to Prague and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 785.

No. 791

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 7)*

*No. 573 Saving: Telegraphic [C 9289/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 6, 1938

M. Bonnet tells me that M. Litvinov has now replied in the following manner to the question put to him by the French Government (see my telegram No. 561 Saving<sup>1</sup> of September 2) as to how Russia would act in the face of German aggression upon Czechoslovakia:—

Russia will, according to the terms of the Russo-Czechoslovak Pact, wait until France has begun to fulfil the obligations incumbent on her according to her own pact with Czechoslovakia.

Russia will then bring the matter before Geneva.

M. Bonnet feels that Russia is showing much more caution in this matter than she wishes others to show.

His Excellency tells me that it now seems, contrary to what M. Léger told me, as reported in my telegram No. 567 Saving<sup>2</sup> of September 5, that Roumania will *not* permit Soviet aeroplanes to fly to Czechoslovakia's assistance over Roumanian territory.

<sup>1</sup> No. 751.

<sup>2</sup> No. 768. This telegram is dated September 4.

M. Bonnet said finally that M. Litvinov had proposed that Great Britain, France and Russia should meet in conference and afterwards issue a joint declaration of their firm intention to keep the peace, if necessary by forcible action in the last resort.

His Excellency is not at all enamoured of this idea. I cannot conceive of anything more likely to infuriate Hitler, and told him so. He will discuss all this with you at Geneva.

No. 792

*Letter from Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

[C 11048/1941/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 6, 1938

My dear Henderson,

I write a line by the bag that goes, I think, today, although by the time you get it it will no doubt be out of date. We are all waiting for the new proposals that Benes has announced his intention to publish. With you I trust they will be of a kind to justify themselves before all opinion which honestly wants to see a settlement and to deny the expectation of those who say that nothing good can come out of Benes. I am pinning great hopes on Runciman to see that he does not try and produce something short of what he is really prepared to offer and what would really have a chance of producing a result.

The reports of the Henlein interview with Hitler did not sound too bad and some secret information that has reached us tends to confirm this view. But it is really impossible to do more than indulge in perpetual guess-work until Nuremberg has produced some light on to the dark places.

I will bear in mind the suggestion you make about the possible invocation of Article 19. It is ingenious. I have more or less given up the idea of making a public speech, largely on what I believe to be your instinct that public speeches are likely to do at least as much harm as good. I am constantly reminding myself of the importance of not getting wrong with the psychology of this strange man, but all said and done one is all the time groping like a blind man trying to find his way across a bog, with everybody shouting from the banks different information as to where the next quagmire is! We have just sent you a telegram of suggestions as to heads of conversation should you meet the great man at Nuremberg. These will, I fancy, have been more or less on the line that you would yourself have been thinking and I hope will have been useful if the need should have arisen, but it looks from what you say as if it were on the whole more likely that it would not arise.

I smiled a lot over your report of the latest aeroplane story<sup>1</sup> in Berlin.

Yours ever,

HALIFAX

<sup>1</sup> It has not been possible to identify this reference with certainty, but see No. 819.

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson to Sir A. Cadogan*

[C 9743/1941/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *September 6, 1938*

It is no exaggeration to say that the world is awaiting with anxiety the message which Hitler has to deliver at Nuremberg. He cannot get out of delivering it: that must be realised. The anxiety is no less great in Germany than elsewhere. And dictators can and must speak more clearly than the leaders of a democracy. That is why I have been pressing these last weeks for a clarification before Nuremberg of the situation at Prague. Benes will never go far enough till he is *made* to do so: and the whole of the Carlsbad points is better than any terms he is likely to [get] later, war or no war. And all the world is looking at us to save civilisation. So that we *must* take the bull by the horns. I have tried to make this clear in my telegram No. 416<sup>1</sup> of today.

I suppose the chances of Hitler coming out at Nuremberg with what will amount to peace or what will amount to war (thunder there is sure to be) are about 50-50. I opt for the former. If I am right I do wish it might be possible to get at any rate 'The Times,' Camrose, Beaverbrook Press &c. to write up Hitler as the apostle of Peace. It will be terribly shortsighted if this is not done. Cannot the News Dept. help? I do not wish to detract from Runciman, though I do feel that it will be a mistake to flatter Benes too much. But give Hitler as much credit as possible. The last word is his. We make a great mistake when our Press persists in abusing him. Let it abuse his evil advisers but give him a chance of being a good boy. If our object is to achieve results that is the only line to take. If our only satisfaction is to slang him, then we must abandon hope of ever getting results. The futility of our attitude during the past years has always appalled me.

Yours ever

NEVILLE HENDERSON

I leave this behind me as I go to Nuremberg tonight, where I shall be out of touch as I am informed that for security's sake I can take no cypher with me in the train in which I shall live.

N. H.

<sup>1</sup> No. 785.

## No. 794

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 13)*

No. 314 [C 9606/4786/18]

PRAGUE, *September 6, 1938*

His Majesty's Minister at Prague presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and has the honour to transmit to him a copy



of a memorandum by the Military Attaché, dated the 3rd September, 1938, respecting the relative strength of the Czech and German armies.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 794

*Memorandum to Mr. Newton by Lieutenant-Colonel Stronge*

PRAGUE, September 3, 1938

A number of articles have recently appeared in British and continental newspapers, some of which are written by military correspondents, purporting to be estimates of the relative military strengths of Germany and Czechoslovakia. Some of these articles have gone so far as to make positive statements as to how long the latter country could hold out single-handed in the face of invasion by the former, and the estimates that I have seen have ranged from three days to one year. Herr Hitler is supposed to have said that such a war would be over in three weeks, which means that, if the attack were launched in the latter part of September, the Czechs would be beaten by about the middle of October. I do not know if he has, in fact, calculated upon so rapid a victory, but would like to point out that, if that is the case, he is counting upon an achievement altogether without precedent in modern times. The factors involved are so multiple and complex that it is impossible, in my opinion, to arrive at any reasonable conclusion in advance even if one credits the German army with all the military attributes in regard to staff work, leadership, equipment, morale, organisation, &c., which a modern army could desire. I am not in a position from personal experience to assess these as regards the German army (though I have, of course, studied the subject as far as I can and have made myself generally acquainted with the views of the military attaché at Berlin), but it might be of interest if I briefly recapitulate my views at the present juncture on these same factors in so far as they apply to the Czech army.

*Staff Work.*—The Czech General Staff undoubtedly have a capacity for organisation, and I do not expect any serious hitch in the process of rapid mobilisation, concentration or subsequent dispositions, except in so far as these may be occasioned by enemy action. The whole process has been the subject of careful study, and such lessons as can be learnt from recent manœuvres, the Sokols, &c., give ground for confidence in this respect.

*Leadership.*—This varies in the Czech army to an even more marked degree than in most. I am not particularly impressed with the leadership of larger formations. The majority of the old Legionary officers, although they enjoy great prestige, are not of the type that makes good commanders. On the other hand, amongst regimental officers I have come across very many who make an excellent impression. The general standard of leadership, however, is probably considerably higher in the German than in the Czech army, a very important factor.

*Equipment.*—For an army which is not absolutely of the front rank the equipment, especially as regards arms, is surprisingly good. The country has

the advantage of possessing an arms industry which can vie with any other in the world, and the army has, of course, profited by this fact. Unfortunately, the General Staff have been so slow in coming to decisions regarding types for adoption that the army is still insufficiently equipped in certain respects, especially in anti-aircraft artillery, heavy artillery and, to a lesser extent, in motor transport. The rate of production is now so good, however, that the shortage is daily becoming less. From what I can hear, the average standard of equipment is not behind that in the German army. The Czechs are convinced that their own is superior.

*Morale.*—This is of necessity the factor which is most difficult to assess accurately. My personal opinion is that the morale of the Czech army and nation is high. Morale, or courage, depends mainly on two factors: the 'cause' and staying power. No one can say that from the Czech point of view the cause is not a good one. They would fight for their very existence and for the maintenance of the independence which they regained twenty years ago after three centuries of domination by the Austro-Germans. Everything points to the fact that they have staying power as well. The mere fact that they succeeded during those three centuries in maintaining their cultural, linguistic and ethnographical individuality in face of the assimilating forces brought to bear on them indicates that they possess a certain stubborn quality which cannot be easily suppressed. The morale of the German army is no doubt very fine and is actuated by a great ideological impulse, but one wonders whether the 'cause' in so far as it affects the individual is not somewhat thinner than in the case of the Czech soldier, the existence of whose country is at stake.

To sum up, there are no shortcomings in the Czech army, as far as I have been able to observe, which are of sufficient consequence to warrant a belief that it cannot give a good account of itself. Its greatest disadvantage *vis-à-vis* Germany is the hard fact of numerical inferiority, which, I understand, may be as much as 1 : 4·5. As against this, the fortifications are now well advanced, and even in their weakest sectors must be of some defensive value. The fighting will take place in country almost every yard of which has been reconnoitred, and whose tactical potentialities are well known to the defenders. Although they can be attacked from a number of different directions simultaneously, the Czechs have the strategical advantage of interior lines. In my view, therefore, there is no material reason why they should not put up a really protracted resistance single-handed. It all depends on their morale. If that gives way, the war cannot last more than a week or two. If it holds, it may drag on for months. The fall of Prague should not be vital.

H. C. T. STRONGE  
*Lieutenant-Colonel, Military Attaché.*

*Mr. Shone (Belgrade) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 7, 8.20 p.m.)*  
*No. 60 Telegraphic [C 9392/1941/18]*

BELGRADE, September 7, 1938, 2.30 p.m.

Berlin telegram No. 410.<sup>1</sup>

I have not seen the Prince Regent since he invited me to lunch on August 19 and he did not discuss politics then.

As you will be aware from my telegrams, President of the Council has, until very recently at least, professed to believe that the German Government would not resort to war on the Sudeten question. But optimism is one of His Excellency's characteristics whereas His Royal Highness' temperament would naturally incline him to be more anxious and pessimistic in a situation like the present. Yugoslav officials are certainly worried; and I can well believe, having regard to representations of German Minister here, President of the Council was himself anxious enough to urge upon Czechoslovak Minister for Foreign Affairs at Bled the necessity of drastic concessions to the Sudetens.

Czechoslovak intrigues against the present régime have been a subject of complaint here for long past and seemingly not without reason though I had supposed that things were now better in that respect. But there is no love lost between Yugoslav President of the Council and the Czechoslovak President and I believe that the latter is not in much better odour with the Prince Regent.

No Yugoslav official has ever mentioned plebiscite in conversation with me as affording a possible solution to Czechoslovak problem, and I cannot but wonder whether Yugoslav Government would really welcome a method which might, after all, be used against them later on. If such is in fact their view it affords a measure of their anxiety.

Despatch containing my views on the attitude of Yugoslav Government in the event of attack on Czechoslovakia by Germany (1) alone (2) with complicity on the part of Hungary (3) with armed support from Hungary should reach you by September 9.<sup>2</sup> My conclusion is that, even in the third case involving their treaty obligations, the Yugoslav Government, though they would probably mobilise, might shrink from coming to aid of Czechoslovakia unless they could count on assistance of Great Britain and France and on neutrality at least of Italy. Prince Regent's views in Sir N. Henderson's telegram<sup>3</sup> indicate the importance which they attach to Italy's attitude.

Military Attaché, who has now seen the above despatch, concurs in it generally though he considers that fellow-Slav feeling in the army and the country might prove a more powerful factor than I have suggested. Although it is difficult to estimate the strength and the effect on policy of such feeling in hypothetical circumstances, my impression is that Yugoslav Government are strongly determined to avoid being drawn into war and that *at the*

<sup>1</sup> No. 774.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed.

<sup>3</sup> No. 774.

moment reluctance to fight for Czechoslovakia is tending to increase. But much must obviously depend on circumstances in which hostilities came about.

I propose, if the circumstances allow, to spend this weekend at Bled and if there is any message that you would wish me to give His Royal Highness I would request an audience there.

Repeated to Prague, Berlin, Bucharest, Budapest, and Rome.

No. 796

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 7, 6.15 p.m.)*  
*No. 519 Telegraphic [C 9355/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 7, 1938, 3.10 p.m.

My telegram No. 516.<sup>1</sup>

Following from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin for Mr. Strang:

Draft protocol which contains new basis proposed by Government for resumption of official negotiations was communicated by Dr. Hodza to Herr Kundt this morning September 7.

This protocol has support of Dr. Benes, Dr. Hodza and the whole of Cabinet. It goes a very long way to meet the eight Karlsbad points. Dr. Preiss, an important and impartial Czech banker who (so he says) had been appealed to by German Minister to obtain Czechoslovak Government's offer that would meet the eight points, telephoned to German Minister at Nuremberg yesterday, September 6, to say that protocol was on point of being given to Herr Kundt and was satisfactory in substance. Lord Runciman received protocol from M. Benes yesterday. We are translating and studying it.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 788.

No. 797

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*  
*No. 236 Saving: Telegraphic [C 8997/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 7, 1938

Mr. Campbell's telegram No. 225.<sup>1</sup>

You should take a suitable opportunity of informing the Minister for Foreign Affairs that His Majesty's Government much appreciate his statement to His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires on August 31 that the French Government would support any arbitral solution of the Sudeten question that might be proposed by His Majesty's Government. His Majesty's Government are not of course contemplating the assumption of the role of arbitrator,

<sup>1</sup> No. 725.

but the knowledge that they enjoy to such a degree the confidence and support of the French Government will be of the greatest assistance to them in their efforts to bring about a settlement of the Sudeten problem which will be acceptable to all concerned.

No. 798

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

*No. 2032 [C 9408/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 7, 1938

Sir,

The French Ambassador asked to see me to-day. His Excellency began by telling me that he had reported to M. Bonnet the doubts that I had expressed a few days ago as to the wisdom of taking further action at Berlin by way of repeating warnings that had been more than once delivered. M. Bonnet fully appreciated these considerations, but none the less still thought that it was important, especially after the conciliatory offer made by the Czechoslovak Government, to dispel an illusion that appeared to prevail in Berlin that in no circumstances would any move be made by this country in the event of Germany resorting to force. M. Bonnet himself had again defined the French position in conversation with the German Ambassador and in his recent speech at Bordeaux. It was, therefore, he thought, important to remove any ambiguity as regards the position of this country, and by a clear warning to make our position very plain to Herr Hitler himself. When European peace was in the balance nothing, in M. Bonnet's view, should be left undone that might possibly dispel dangerous misunderstanding or bring Herr Hitler to a serious appreciation of the risks involved in the adoption of extreme courses.

2. I asked the Ambassador whether, by his suggestion that it was important to remove any ambiguity, M. Bonnet intended to suggest that this country should go further than the position defined by the Prime Minister on the 24th March. M. Corbin disclaimed any such intention on the part of M. Bonnet, but suggested that the same thing might be said again in such a way as to be of great service.

3. I said that I would certainly consider this, and naturally His Majesty's Government would wish to give full weight to the suggestion that M. Bonnet had made. It was, indeed, one that we had always before our minds. I told the Ambassador that, as I had more than once said to M. Bonnet, we were constantly obliged to have regard to public opinion in this country and in the Empire. As I saw this at present, and making full allowance for the wider issues that public opinion might recognise to be involved in any attack on Czechoslovakia, I thought that there was a distinction to be drawn. I did not think that British public opinion, although it might change as the situation developed, would be willing to contemplate being involved in war on direct account of Czechoslovakia. While this was certainly true, I thought

it was also probable that if France was obliged to act in discharge of her obligations, British public opinion would realise that we could not allow France to be in trouble, without wishing to do our best to help her. This distinction meant that, although Great Britain might feel obliged to support France in a conflict, if only because it would recognise that British interests were involved in any threat to French security, it did not mean that we should be willing automatically to find ourselves at war with Germany, because France might be involved in discharge of obligations which Great Britain did not share, and which a large section of British opinion had always disliked.

4. It was impossible to predict events, but it was perhaps not other than useful, though I recognised that what I said was purely speculative, to attempt to picture what might possibly occur. Let us suppose that at some point Herr Henlein, under dictation from Berlin, were to say that he had finished with the Prague negotiations, that he was setting up his own home rule Government, that he invited Herr Hitler to support him against oppression by Prague, and that, in such an event, Herr Hitler were to march in from the Austrian frontier, and after some short period were able to say that he had achieved his immediate purpose of giving protection to the Sudetendeutsch and was prepared to stop any further hostilities. In any such event I scarcely supposed that the French people would, and I was quite sure the British people would not, wish to embark upon protracted hostilities against what would have appeared to be a secession movement on the part of the Sudetendeutsch. It was, of course, impossible for anyone to predict how the situation would develop, but, if, as I could not help feeling, it was in Herr Hitler's mind, on some pretext or other, and in some form or other, to make a quick cut if he moved at all, I doubted whether any warning given by this country, even if we had been able, which we were not, to go so far as to assert that, in the event of any aggression on Czechoslovakia, we should immediately declare war, would be effective for the reason that Herr Hitler's premises would be of a different character.

5. It was for this reason and because, as we had always recognised, any French action bore so directly upon our own that I did earnestly hope, if and when the situation arose, that the French Government would still be prepared to consult us before taking any action involving them in hostilities with Germany. M. Corbin said in reply to this that he was sure the French Government would have this much in mind, and, as I would agree, they had acted, and he could assure me that they would continue to act, with the utmost prudence. We both agreed that in such a situation as I had described, the setting would be very different from that which prevailed in the case of Austria. There would be battles and a small people would be defending its independence, and it might well be that popular feeling would be very quickly and deeply moved.

6. From the French side M. Corbin repeated the gravity of the obligations under which they lay by treaty, and said that, even from the point of view of French interests, it had to be very carefully weighed whether the best way to

peace was to refrain from taking up a challenge if such were nakedly thrown down. One had always to revert to the actual situation of the moment. This was a situation in which great external pressure from Germany was being exercised upon Czechoslovakia based upon a conviction that in the event nobody would seriously move against any action that Germany might take. Moreover, the extent to which the Czechoslovak Government had been willing to go under the joint pressure of Lord Runciman and of the French and ourselves clearly made the French position very much more difficult. I told M. Corbin that I would certainly bring what he had said to the notice of my colleagues.

I am, &c.,  
HALIFAX

**No. 799**

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 264 Telegraphic [C 9399/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 8, 1938, 1.25 a.m.*

Following for Lord Runciman:—

We have had conflicting reports about Deputies incident,<sup>1</sup> one saying that negotiations have been broken off, the other saying that as result of your intervention Hodza has given assurances on strength of which Sudeten leaders are reconsidering their decision to break. I am prepared to make personal appeal to Hitler if negotiations are in fact broken off. Please telephone any information you can as to position and whether you think such appeal necessary or useful.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> At Mährisch-Ostrau. See No. 801, note 1.

**No. 800**

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 8, 1.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 524 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9397/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, *September 8, 1938*

Your telegram No. 264.<sup>1</sup>

Following from Lord Runciman:

We do not think such an appeal necessary or desirable. See our immediately following telegram.<sup>2</sup>

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 799.

<sup>2</sup> No. 801.

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 8, 2.15 p.m.)*  
*No. 525 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9402/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 8, 1938

My telegram No. 523<sup>1</sup> and my immediately preceding telegram.<sup>2</sup>

Following from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin for Mr. Strang.

Last night after Prime Minister had seen Herren Kundt and Sebekowsky communiqué was issued to the following effect:—

Deputies Kundt and Rosche were received by Dr. Hodza yesterday evening September 7 and informed him of the Sudeten German party's delegation's decision that the party was not in a position to proceed with negotiations until the Mährisch-Ostrau incidents had been liquidated. Dr. Hodza informed them that the competent Ministers had already that afternoon given instructions for the incidents to be strictly investigated and those found guilty to be punished and other necessary measures to be taken.

The party's delegation would be informed of the results of these measures on September 8.

Herr Kundt told me he thought it would take until tomorrow September 9 and that then or next day negotiations with Government would be resumed.

Sudeten circles here say that Herr Hitler will make his big speech on Monday September 12.

Lord Runciman saw President at 10.30 this morning. He confirmed that all necessary measures were being taken to settle Mährisch-Ostrau affair and added that one of the police had been degraded at once.

Though obviously suspicious of intentions of some of the Sudeten Dr. Benes showed no further sign of the resentment which he expressed last week (my telegram No. 518)<sup>3</sup> at pressure put upon him by British and French Governments. He admitted that he was meeting with some difficulty from some of his own supporters but expressed confidence in overcoming their opposition to concessions contained in new Government proposals which he is now backing with all his weight.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram reported the refusal of the Sudeten German party's delegation to continue negotiations until the Mährisch-Ostrau affair had been 'cleared up' and the police severely punished. The incidents of which they complained occurred when a delegation of Sudeten German deputies and officials arrived at Mährisch-Ostrau to investigate conditions. The delegation alleged that a riot had taken place and that a Sudeten German Deputy had been insulted and beaten by a Czech policeman. After careful investigation of this incident Major Sutton-Pratt and Mr. Pares considered (i) that the so-called 'riot' had been deliberately staged by the Sudeten representatives, (ii) that the Deputy had not been 'beaten' and probably had not been struck at all, (iii) that he was actually assaulting a Czech at the moment when the 'beating' was said to have taken place, and (iv) that, if he had been 'beaten', he 'would have got no more than he deserved' for his own conduct.

<sup>2</sup> No. 800.

<sup>3</sup> See No. 788, note 4.



No. 802

*Viscount Chilston (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 8, 8.0 p.m.)  
No. 166 Telegraphic [C 9429/1941/18]

MOSCOW, September 8, 1938, 6.10 p.m.

My telegram No. 165.<sup>1</sup>

Having occasion to see M. Potyomkin<sup>2</sup> today on some other matter, I referred to M. Litvinov's presence at Geneva and asked what was likely to be on the agenda there. After mentioning League reform question and Chinese *démarche* he said that there seemed to be no question of Czech-German conflict being submitted to the League. As to that crisis he said that he believed that Czechoslovak Government would make uttermost concessions but that even these might not avail. He added that in his opinion there would, nevertheless, be 'No war' chiefly because German army was not yet fit for one and German people were against one. He repeated what is already well known, that Soviet Union was not obliged to intervene unless and until France were actually engaged; and I gathered impression that he doubted whether France was politically in a position to make an immediate or powerful move.

<sup>1</sup> No. 761.

<sup>2</sup> M. U. P. Potemkin, Deputy Commissar for Foreign Affairs.

No. 803

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 8, 10.30 p.m.)*  
No. 526 Telegraphic [C 9430/1941/18]

PRAGUE, September 8, 1938, 6.30 p.m.

My telegram No. 519.<sup>1</sup>

Following from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin for Mr. Strang:—

New proposals are a rather hurriedly constructed amalgam of Government and Sudeten proposals as discussed between President and Herr Kundt last week. They require much clarification; but they are sufficiently near the eight points to serve as an adequate basis for resuming official negotiations and this has been recognised by Sudeten delegation.

Difficult question is self-government which proposals leave purposely vague. Herr Kundt has told me that personally he does not like Gau system which he thinks is unworkable and expensive owing to multiplication of officials. Equally he has not much to say in favour of his own party's 'sketch' which he characterized as too legalistic. He would, I think, prefer double provincial Diets and double district councils in mixed districts which would be simpler and more (? palatable)<sup>2</sup> and would provide for both German and Czech minorities also a 'Curia' with limited competence in Czech parliament,

<sup>1</sup> No. 796.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

and (? a)<sup>3</sup> State Council advisory to the President with nationality representation. He believes that some judicial tribunal will be necessary for some time after agreement is concluded to see that it is duly carried out. But these are his personal views. It will be for his delegation to submit to Henlein their observations as to whether any draft agreement fulfils Karlsbad points or not; and on these observations Henlein will decide.

On Czech side I am afraid proposals are looked upon as a national misfortune to be endured for the sake of peace. Dr. Meissner for instance said to me that they go much too far. . . .<sup>3</sup> President for unconstitutional action in mixing in negotiations and for not keeping Cabinet i.e. the parties informed. I trust sacrifice could possibly be made. He said Czechs would blame England and say we had made a 'Kuhhandel'<sup>4</sup> in sacrificing Czechoslovakia in order to retain British colonies. Dr. Preiss, the Czech banker, thinks Government may have to go still further and grant a 'Curia' in State parliamentary rule. Even five months ago he said Government could have bought the same result i.e. peace at a cheaper price; but they have delayed until market has gone against them.

Adequate analyses of proposals have been published in the press: comparison with eight points can be found in 'Times' of September 7 and also in note sent you by air mail on September 7.<sup>5</sup>

Repeated to Berlin Saving.

<sup>3</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>4</sup> i.e. 'a deal'.

<sup>5</sup> Not printed.

## No. 804

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 265 Telegraphic [C 9323/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 8, 1938, 7.30 p.m.*

Your telegrams Nos. 516 and 517.<sup>1</sup>

Following for Lord Runciman.

1. The proposals of the Czechoslovak Government, as described in Mr. Newton's telegram No. 516, though they follow the same general lines as those which you yourself were preparing (Mr. Newton's telegram No. 505<sup>2</sup>), differ from them in some important respects.

2. May I take it that it is still your intention, in the event of a breakdown in the negotiations, to produce proposals of your own differing in content from those now put forward by the Czechoslovak Government? Or do these latest Czechoslovak proposals in fact represent substantially what you yourself would propose in the event of your deciding to state your own view?

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> Nos. 788-9.

<sup>2</sup> No. 756.

*Mr. Shone (Belgrade) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 9, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 62 Telegraphic [C 9431/1941/18]*

BELGRADE, September 8, 1938, 8.40 p.m.

German Military Attaché has spoken very frankly to Colonel Stronge about Czechoslovak situation. He said Nazi leaders in reality cared little about the Sudeten question though they required a satisfactory solution of it for window dressing. What they did want and what they would sooner or later seek to get, for economic reasons, was Czechoslovakia itself, as other means of improving economic conditions in Germany had failed. Former member of Austrian Legation here spoke in a similar strain.

German Military Attaché believed that Herr Hitler's policy was at the moment largely one of bluff and that he would not now risk a world war. But there was nevertheless danger that a sudden incident might start a conflagration.

Repeated to Berlin and Prague.

No. 806

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 266 Telegraphic [C 9426/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 8, 1938, 9.35 p.m.

1. We have been considering what, if any, action could be taken at this end, before Hitler makes his speech on Monday, that might deter him from committing himself irretrievably on that occasion.

2. I have not yet had opportunity to examine details of new Czech proposals, but from your summary of them I should say that they afford good basis of discussion. I also gather that that is Lord Runciman's view.

3. If on further examination and reflection I am confirmed in this view the Prime Minister might be prepared to summon the press and make to them a statement on following lines:

4. 'It has more than once been made plain that in the opinion of His Majesty's Government the Czech problem, difficult and complicated as it is, should be capable of peaceful and agreed solution. It was to help to attain this end that we suggested that Lord Runciman should go to Prague. Every impartial person must appreciate his courage and his diligence. And now that the latest proposals have been put forward by the Czech Government the question that every friend of peace is asking is whether the prospects of settlement have been advanced. Without pronouncing upon the details or denying that much difficult discussion lies ahead, I say without hesitation that in this new situation His Majesty's Government are yet more clearly convinced that it should be possible to arrive at an agreed solution by way of friendly discussion and negotiation.'

'I have been informed by Lord Runciman that he himself holds this view, and I believe that this opinion will be generally held throughout the world.'

5. I should be glad to learn whether you and Lord Runciman think this would be useful and whether Lord Runciman would allow Prime Minister to associate him with the view expressed.

6. If it were decided to make such a statement, it might be necessary to make it tomorrow evening, so that it could have sufficient circulation in good time before Monday.

7. I should be grateful for earliest possible reply.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

#### No. 807

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 8)*

*No. 579 Saving: Telegraphic [C 9420/36/17]*

PARIS, September 8, 1938

My telegram No. 563 Saving.<sup>1</sup>

I called on the President of the Council this afternoon and remained with him for about half an hour. I told him that I felt sure it would interest the Prime Minister and Your Lordship to hear his views on the present situation.

M. Daladier is convinced that, if Hitler could only be made to realise that German aggression on Czechoslovakia means a general war, he would abstain and perhaps seek to gain his ends by means of economic pressure. Unfortunately, he firmly believes that France would not march and that Great Britain would do nothing.

M. Daladier declares most positively that, if German troops cross the Czechoslovak frontier, the French will march to a man. They realise perfectly well that this will be not for *les beaux yeux* of the Czechs but for their own skins, as, after a given time, Germany would, with enormously increased strength, turn against France. I suggested that a lot of tough Slavs might prove difficult for even Germany to digest, but M. Daladier would not admit this and pointed to East Prussia, where Teutons had succeeded in assimilating Slavs.

I then enquired what action France would be able to take in the event of war. Would it not be a case of stalemate in the Maginot and Siegfried Lines respectively, with intensive warfare only in the air? The President of the Council denied this, and said that he had been discussing it only a couple of days ago with General Gamelin, who is convinced that he would be able to undertake a series of limited offensives. The Siegfried Line is not in the least comparable to the Maginot Line. There is very little concrete about it. It mostly consists of field-works. Work on it has been unduly hasty. Another year or even more would be necessary to make it really formidable. Of course, if Belgium's policy had been different, things might have been otherwise, and a large sweeping offensive might and would have been conducted through Belgium.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. See No. 768, note 1.

M. Daladier confirmed what M. Léger told me regarding the information the French are giving to the Germans and Italians about military counter-measures to those taken by Germany. In this connexion, the French Ambassador at Berlin (who is very pessimistic about German intentions) has reported that a state of 'alerte' has been declared in Germany. The French have therefore asked the German Embassy here whether this is true and await a reply. If true, it is a very serious matter, and is nearly equivalent to mobilisation. If confirmed, the French will take similar measures, and have so informed the Germans and Italians (these latter have so far not taken any military measures on the French frontier).

I asked the President of the Council what view he took of the French internal situation. There seemed still to be a certain number of strikes going on. Did the French public realise the great danger of the international situation? M. Daladier replied that the internal situation was excellent. The present strike movements were insignificant, and the French public fully realised the situation. The Germans had made a big mistake in proceeding to concentrate troops on the French frontier. Had they confined their troop movements to the Czechoslovak frontiers, the French public might well have thought that France was not aimed at and that she could abstain from action, but now they saw that their own lives were at stake and, as they could only die once, they were ready for all emergencies. The numerous reservists, who had been called back at twenty-four hours' notice from their holidays, their fishing, bathing or shooting, had gone to the Maginot Line gaily and without a murmur. So it would be if hostilities were to break out. In this connexion, M. Bonnet told me yesterday that at a recent Communist meeting at Garches, near Paris, no sign of protest was made when the loud-speaker named several reservists as being due to rejoin their regiments.

M. Daladier does not contemplate summoning Parliament before its normal session, even in case of war. He will take all the necessary measures, as he is empowered to do under the law for the organisation of the nation in case of danger of war, and stand the consequences.

I reminded M. Daladier of the promise of the French Government to keep us fully informed and to consult us before taking measures of force. He assured me this promise would be kept, but my impression is that French action would follow pretty soon on any German attack upon Czechoslovakia.

M. Daladier seemed inclined to have greater hopes of efficacious support from Russia than M. Bonnet. He told me that Russia was concentrating troops on the Roumanian frontier, that the 'purge' of the Soviet army had ceased, and that his impression was that, if Russian aeroplanes flew high at night over Poland or Roumania, the authorities of those two countries would not see and would pretend not to hear them.

*Viscount Halifax to Viscount Chilston (Moscow)**No. 548 [C 9415/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 8, 1938

My Lord,

The Soviet Ambassador called to see me this afternoon at my request. I told his Excellency that I had wished to let him know that, owing to the international situation, I had felt obliged to abandon my visit for the present to Geneva, though I still hoped, if circumstances permitted, to go later. M. Maisky said that he understood my position and would convey my regrets to M. Litvinov.

2. The Ambassador then referred at some length to the leading article in 'The Times' yesterday upon the possibility of the secession of the Sudeten-deutsch from the Czechoslovak State. He said that, in his judgment, this article had had the worst possible effect. I told him that I did not in any way disagree with his judgment in this matter, and added that he would no doubt have noticed the official *démenti* of any Government connexion with the idea that the leading article contained.<sup>1</sup> M. Maisky asked whether we could not reinforce this official *démenti* by some more personal *démenti* through the mouth of some Minister. I told him that it was not our habit to repeat contradictions, nor, indeed, did I think that repetition in such cases did any good.

3. The Ambassador then asked me whether I had anything further to tell him concerning the position of Great Britain as regards Czechoslovakia. I said that this had been more than once defined, and I was not prepared to add to what had been said. We were watching the situation very closely, and were fully alive to the necessity of taking any action without delay that the circumstances might appear to demand and that might be within our power. M. Maisky proceeded to develop at some length the general Soviet view about aggressors and aggression. In the course of some conversation on

<sup>1</sup> On the evening of September 7 a statement had been issued for publication that 'a suggestion appearing in "The Times" this morning to the effect that the Czechoslovak Government might consider as an alternative to their present proposals the secession of the fringe of alien populations in their territory in no way represents the views of His Majesty's Government'.

The attention of the Foreign Office had been drawn to the article by the Czechoslovak Minister in the following terms: 'although I have been able to assure my Government that "The Times" newspaper is quite independent in its political opinions and not inspired by His Majesty's Government, my Government is aware . . . that the knowledge of the above-mentioned newspaper's independence is not shared by a very large section of the population abroad.' Sir E. Phipps had reported inquiries from the French Foreign Office whether the article 'expressed the views of His Majesty's Government'. A message had also been received from Lord Runciman: 'leading article in to-day's "Times" has added to our difficulties. We are dealing with the matter here, but it would be useful to caution them against adventurous speculations at a time when we are hoping to make some progress. The last paragraph of article is a recommendation of an Anschluss.'

this topic, I reminded M. Maisky that the position of the Soviet Union and of France differed from that of this country in respect of treaty obligations towards Czechoslovakia, though we shared with them the general obligations of the Covenant.

4. Finally, M. Maisky told me that M. Litvinov had again suggested to the French Government that the Soviet Union would be willing to co-operate with France and the United Kingdom in a joint note to Berlin. Such joint action might be expected to enlist the support of the United States. The matter, therefore, lay with the French Government and ourselves. I thanked M. Maisky for his information, of which I said I had already learned from the French Government through our Ambassador in Paris.

I am, &c.,  
HALIFAX

No. 809

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 9, 10.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 532 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9418/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 9, 1938

Your telegram No. 266.<sup>1</sup>

Lord Runciman fears that such a statement would be unlikely to help and might conceivably hinder resumption of negotiations with Sudeten leaders. He would prefer not to be associated with it for the above reasons and because it might impair his position and influence as an impartial mediator. You will be aware that the latest proposals appear to have been accepted as a basis and that negotiations have not been broken off but only interrupted pending liquidation of Mährisch-Ostrau affair.

2. He feels anxious too lest so evident an attempt to forestall Herr Hitler at Nuremberg might not [*sic*] act as irritant and even incitement rather than a deterrent. I had formed similar views before this telegram was shown to Lord Runciman.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 806.

No. 810

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 9, 11.35 a.m.)*  
*No. 421 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9428/1941/18]*

BERLIN,<sup>1</sup> September 9, 1938

Prague telegram No. 524.<sup>2</sup>

I also strongly deprecate proposal and I doubt whether audience could be arranged. I shall be visiting Minister for Foreign Affairs this morning.

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was transmitted from Berlin.

<sup>2</sup> No. 800.

In spite of hitch in Prague, proposals are being carefully studied in Nuremberg.

I return to Berlin leaving midnight tonight arriving Saturday morning at 7.55.

Repeated to Prague by Foreign Office.

No. 811

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Nuremberg)*<sup>1</sup>

*Unnumbered. En clair [C 9656/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 9, 1938, 6.40 p.m.*

Please inform Minister for Foreign Affairs immediately that you will shortly receive a message for him which I wish you to deliver to him personally tomorrow.

For your information I hope that this message may reach you tomorrow morning. But it will in any case arrive by the afternoon.

Please therefore ask Minister for Foreign Affairs to give you an appointment tomorrow.

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was sent to Sir N. Henderson at Nuremberg and also telephoned to Berlin with instructions to telephone it on.

No. 812

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 10, 9.30 a.m.)*

*No. 534 Telegraphic [C 9543/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, *September 9, 1938, 7.42 p.m.*

Following from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin for Mr. Strang.

I have had opportunity of seeing what was described as being the advice prepared by Herr Kier Reich-German legal adviser to Sudeten Deutsch party regarding acceptance or refusal of new proposals. Argument was based *prima facie* on the importance of the question in relation to elimination of Czechoslovakia as an effective enemy of Germany; it did not refer in any way to the Sudeten position and grievances. The main line of the argument was as follows:—

Refusal would unite Czech parties in support of the Government and would rally French and British assistance to Czechoslovakia.

Acceptance would split Czech political parties and Czech population into those for and those against the treaty and would definitely weaken Czechoslovakia.

Refusal might accelerate a crisis; acceptance could at any rate do no harm to the German cause and might do good. It would not commit Germany in any way with regard to future contingencies. The advice therefore was definitely in favour of acceptance.



The attitude of England in the matter was characterized as playing for time; but the writer was uncertain whether this betokened eventual hostility or conciliation in regard to Germany.

The Mährisch-Ostrau affair was referred to as weakening negotiating position of Sudeten party experts' views<sup>1</sup> [*sic*] (probably drafted by Schicketanz) on satisfactory character of Government's new proposals.

The proposals it states cover all essential Karlsbad demands and are formulated largely on the basis of Sudeten counter-propositions to Dr. Benes. It refers to certain doubtful points regarding absence of 'Curia' in State Parliament, juridical personality, provision of central body to unite separated Gaus (this is essential and has been verbally recognized by Dr. Hodza as such), provision of self-government which was formulated only in general terms. It adds that police question is satisfactorily handled; but that an amnesty for political offences should also be granted. It concludes that when obscurities have been cleared up for (*sic*, ? and)<sup>1</sup> suggested additions made with corresponding guarantees then from a legal point of view draft can be regarded as theoretically suitable basis for fixing a framework for foundations for realization of Karlsbad eight points and thus obtaining objective within formal framework of the State. The warning is added from twenty years' experience regarding probable difficulties in . . .<sup>2</sup> legislation to carry out agreement. I understand that these two documents are to be taken to Nuremberg by Frank and Schicketanz who leave today September 9 for the guidance of Henlein and perhaps the German Government also. All the foregoing should be treated as highly confidential, I suggest minimum distribution.

<sup>1</sup> The text here appears corrupt.

<sup>2</sup> The text here is uncertain.

### No. 813

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 10, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 535 Telegraphic [C 9507/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 9, 1938, 7.45 p.m.

Your telegram No. 265.<sup>1</sup>

Following from Lord Runciman.

While it is true that proposals of Czechoslovak Government differ in some respects from those which I have been preparing the general line is the same. In the event of breakdown (which I do not now anticipate unless brought on by some external influence or internal incident) I might still have to produce proposals but everything would depend on the circumstances of the case.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 804.

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 9, 1938*

Sir,

The French Ambassador called to see me this evening. His Excellency began by saying that M. Bonnet had wished to urge very strongly upon His Majesty's Government that in the event of all efforts at conciliation failing at Prague, Lord Runciman should be ready to formulate his own proposals and conclusions.

2. The purpose of this proposal in M. Bonnet's mind was that it might forestall a proposal by Herr Hitler, such as, for example, a proposal for a plebiscite, which would be known in advance to be unacceptable to the Czechs and would therefore create a very difficult position. Lord Runciman's contacts with both sides qualified him in a special degree to know what could be done, and the French Government were always ready to consider and, M. Corbin thought, to accept any conciliation proposals that he might put forward.

3. M. Corbin then proceeded to show me a telegram which he had received from M. Bonnet which said that on information at the disposal of the French Government, they were now satisfied that Herr Hitler had decided to intervene by force in Czechoslovakia, counting upon what he judged to be the uncertainty of British policy and the hampering effect that this was exercising on France. It was accordingly in M. Bonnet's view urgent that His Majesty's Government should do anything in their power to correct this impression by direct representations to the German Government and to Herr Hitler.

4. M. Corbin proceeded to make a few observations upon the French position. He had been more than once surprised by the doubts expressed by his English friends as to what the French would in fact do if the situation arose. We should have received, he thought, your account of your conversation with M. Daladier yesterday,<sup>1</sup> and if a German attack was made on Czechoslovakia, the French Government had, in fact, no choice. They must mobilise and declare war, but he emphasised that this would only be in the case of deliberate attack by Germany.

5. I told M. Corbin that as concerned the first of his suggestions, I would certainly transmit it to Lord Runciman, but I naturally could not predict what he would feel about it. He had been very careful to maintain his rôle of mediator, and it might be that if the situation was reached where further negotiations were clearly impossible owing to German interference, Lord Runciman might feel that no useful purpose would be served by his making any further contribution. M. Corbin appreciated this, but still emphasised the usefulness of such a statement being made by Lord Runciman in that event, from the point of view of its effect on public opinion and the extra difficulty that it would create for the German Government.

<sup>1</sup> See No. 807.

6. In regard to the telegram that he had shown me as to the French information of Herr Hitler's intentions, I told him that a great deal of our information corresponded with that of the French Government. We had accordingly to-day been considering the draft of some further instructions to the British Ambassador in Berlin on which he might make further representations to the German Government. If and when these were made they would, I hoped, emphasise to the German Government, in unmistakable form, the gravity of the situation as we saw it and the great dangers of general conflict to which any violent action by Germany must inevitably give rise.

7. We had, however, received a press message to the effect that our Ambassador had had a long interview with Herr Hitler this afternoon. We felt that if this was so it would clearly be right to await his report of that interview before taking further action, and we were actually engaged at this moment in trying to ascertain whether this report was correct or not. If it was correct, we should examine his report as soon as we could get hold of it. If it was not correct, I thought we should probably instruct him to make the representations on which we had agreed. It had also been decided this evening to take certain measures in regard to the fleet that I hoped would have a useful effect on the German Government when they were announced.

8. In regard to what he had said about the French position, I said that I need not assure him how fully I appreciated the force of everything that M. Daladier had said yesterday in regard to French obligations in certain events to your Excellency. The position in which the French Government were by reason of their obligations to Czechoslovakia was perfectly understood in this country. At the same time I must not leave him in any doubt, although I had no reason to think that any doubt existed in his mind or in that of his Government, in regard to the British position. Whatever we might feel about any action that Germany might take in Czechoslovakia, I did not think that British opinion would be prepared, any more than I thought His Majesty's Government would be prepared, to enter upon hostilities with Germany on account of aggression by Germany on Czechoslovakia. As I had more than once said to him, while we naturally had the French obligations clearly in mind, it was none the less true that by no action that anyone could take on behalf of Czechoslovakia could the latter be effectively protected from German attack should such be launched. Nor, if one might imagine European statesmen after another war sitting down to draw the boundaries of Czechoslovakia in the drafting of a new peace treaty, could anyone suppose that the exact boundary as it stood to-day would be maintained. To fight a European war for something that you could not in fact protect, and did not expect to restore, was from this point of view a course which must deserve most serious thought, before it was undertaken. Moreover, supposing Herr Hitler demanded a plebiscite. A great mass of opinion in all countries would most certainly think that it was unreasonable to embark upon a European war to prevent people voting as to their future position. M. Corbin interjected to say that he did not suppose that the French would wish to fight against a plebiscite, but only in the case of a direct

German attack. I pointed out to M. Corbin that if and when the plebiscite situation arose and was refused by M. Benes, the position would not be wholly clear and that public opinion in this country, at least, would certainly be confused. I accordingly begged him to impress upon his Government again the urgency of our desire that the French Government should keep us fully informed, and consult us before embarking upon measures that must involve them in war. M. Corbin said that they would, of course, do so, and it was because they also realised the extreme gravity of the position that they were concerned to press the importance of doing everything that we could to produce the psychological change in the directing mind of Germany which could alone secure a peaceful issue from the present anxieties.

9. At one point in our conversation M. Corbin said that if it was only a question of Czechoslovakia, it might be possible to judge the issue differently. The French Government, however, felt that if this contemplated aggression were allowed to pass unresisted, their turn would come next. I said that this really was an argument in favour of a certain war now, against the possibility of war, perhaps in more unfavourable conditions, later. With that argument I had never been able to feel any sympathy: nor did I think that the conclusion of it could be justified.

I am, &c.,  
HALIFAX

**No. 815**

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Kirkpatrick (Berlin)*

*No. 354 Telegraphic [C 9656/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 9, 1938, 10.30 p.m.*

Please pass following at once to His Majesty's Ambassador<sup>1</sup> by method arranged:—

You should at once read following message to Minister for Foreign Affairs, leaving with him a copy, and requesting that it be transmitted without delay to Herr Hitler:—

'His Majesty's Government are so greatly disturbed by the signs of deterioration in the atmosphere surrounding the negotiations at Prague and by the seriousness of the consequences of any other than a peaceful solution that they feel impelled to approach the German Government and to ask for their co-operation in averting any such calamitous termination to the discussions.

'As the German Government are aware, His Majesty's Government have exercised the strongest pressure on the Czechoslovak Government to induce them to make the concessions necessary to produce a just solution. As a result partly of representations from the British and French Governments and partly of the efforts of the Runciman Mission, the Czechoslovak Government has made proposals which, in the view of His Majesty's Government,

<sup>1</sup> i.e. at Nuremberg.

go far to meet the claims put forward on behalf of the Sudeten Germans and therefore afford a reasonable and hopeful basis for negotiations. Indeed, His Majesty's Government feel confident that with patience and goodwill on all sides it should be possible to arrive at an agreed settlement. If in place of this there were recourse to force, a situation would arise leading directly to a request from the Czechoslovak Government for assistance. In such circumstances His Majesty's Government are convinced that the French Government would consider themselves bound to discharge their Treaty obligations to Czechoslovakia.

'France having thus become involved it seems to His Majesty's Government inevitable that the sequence of events must result in a general conflict from which Great Britain could not stand aside. In this connexion the recent declaration made on behalf of the British Labour movement, in which they call upon the British Government to state "that they will unite with the French and Soviet Governments to resist any attack upon Czechoslovakia", shows how opinion in responsible Labour circles is moving. Whatever might be the issue of such a struggle, no one can doubt that the end must be disastrous to all concerned—victors and vanquished alike.

'His Majesty's Government have felt it their duty to express plainly their view of the momentous character of the issues at stake, affecting all Europe, and indeed the whole world. They would most strongly urge the German Government to use every effort, as His Majesty's Government will assuredly do on their part, to avert a tragic and avoidable disaster.'

You should contrive that Field-Marshal Göring be fully informed of contents of foregoing message.

## No. 816

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 10)*

*No. 580 Saving: Telegraphic [C 9499/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 9, 1938

M. Léon Blum lunched alone with me today.

He seemed very depressed and spoke with real dread of the danger of war. With almost pathetic insistence he declared several times that the key to the situation was in the hands of His Majesty's Government. If they made it abundantly clear to Hitler that German aggression would inevitably bring in Great Britain he would never dare to attack Czechoslovakia: 'Il y a des actes de folie que même un fou ne commet pas', he remarked.

I replied that I did not think it would be possible for us to go further than we had already gone, and to repeat a statement of policy too often might only have a weakening besides an irritating effect.

I asked M. Blum about the French internal situation, and he entirely confirmed M. Daladier's optimistic opinion, as reported yesterday. The present strikes were negligible and the reservists were joining their regiments without a murmur.

In case of hostilities M. Blum said that Parliament would certainly have to be summoned from its vacation.

M. Blum does not believe that Hitler will demand a plebiscite. By doing so he would upset Italy (South Tyrol), Poland (Silesia and Corridor), Roumania (Transylvania) and Yugoslavia, and upset them all too soon to suit his book.

#### No. 817

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 12)*

*No. 468 Saving: Telegraphic [C 9563/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 9, 1938

A joint meeting took place on September 8, with Deputy Frank in the chair, of the political directorate of the Sudeten German party and the representatives of the Slovak People's party, the United Hungarian parties and the Polish Committee of Understanding. In a communiqué issued after the meeting it is stated that complete agreement was reached on the fundamental questions of the urgently necessary reconstruction of the State and of the solution of the nationalities problem and that it was decided to continue the joint discussions.

The semi-official 'Prager Presse' says that this meeting has caused a considerable stir in political circles, in particular the attendance thereat of the Slovak leader, Dr. Tiso, who had had an audience with the President of the Republic on the same day. The impression reigned, says the paper, that the meeting should be regarded in connection with the Government's proposals as a political demonstration and as a preparation for an offensive campaign.

Repeated to Berlin by Foreign Office.

#### No. 818

*Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received September 10, 11.5 a.m.)*

*No. 424 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9510/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 10, 1938

Chancellor's speech last night reflects his determination not to appear before the world as capitulating to threats.

If despite view of Sir N. Henderson that warning now would be ill-timed and disastrous in its effect, you should decide on (? other)<sup>1</sup> grounds to issue one, it is clearly most important that *démarche* should be kept quite secret.

Possibility of warning being issued is already being ventilated in 'Daily Telegraph' according to German press. There is also danger of leakage in Paris.

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.

No. 819

*Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 10, 1.10 p.m.)

No. 426 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9519/1941/18]

BERLIN, September 10, 1938

Following for Sir A. Cadogan.

Following are extracts from letter from Sir N. Henderson which has just reached me by messenger.

'Most fatal thing would be any repetition or appearance of repetition of May 21 threat. I have seen Field-Marshal Göring, Dr. Goebbels, Baron von Neurath, Herr von Ribbentrop and many others. My appreciation of the situation is still as follows. Herr Hitler is determined to have and must have a solution. If it can be arranged locally at Prague all will be well. If it cannot, the Chancellor will have to decide what the next step will be and he has as yet made no decision. There will be no aggression against Czechoslovakia but if Czechs go on pin-pricking anything may happen and no threat will deter the Chancellor once he decides that German honour (as he sees it) obliges him to act.

'I have suggested to Herr von Ribbentrop and Dr. Goebbels (latter received suggestion well and will pass it on to Herr Hitler) that in Monday's speech the Chancellor should say something on the following lines:—

"I welcomed British intervention at Prague in May in hope that results would ensue. None did, but British Government sent out Lord Runciman. They did not ask us beforehand yet we have done nothing to interfere with his attempts to find solution. We are still prepared and anxious to co-operate with the British Government in finding a peaceful solution on such and such lines (Karlsbad plan for instance)."

'Baron von Neurath though he has not seen Herr Hitler is convinced that the Chancellor will not go too far or burn his boats in Monday's speech. I believe this is true but if we say too much now it may just upset the apple cart. *I have made British position as clear as daylight to people who count.* I cannot do more here.

'It is essential to keep cool as the atmosphere is electric. As it is, the tale of a London aeroplane with a message for me is enough to start stories of another May 21, and that must be avoided at all costs. It will drive Herr Hitler straight off the deep end.'

No. 820

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 10, 2.45 p.m.)*

No. 539 Telegraphic [C 9514/4786/18]

PRAGUE, September 10, 1938, 1.15 p.m.

Military Attaché visited the General Staff this morning and was told that they were becoming increasingly anxious regarding their own lack of any

precautionary measures in view of present great strength and state of preparedness of German army. Present strength of Czech army was only the same as it was last September. If Herr Hitler's speech on Monday should indicate increased danger it was likely that Czechs would mobilise at once but no actual decision on this point had yet been reached.

Colonel Stronge considers General Staff will urge necessity for this step very strongly if it is opposed though he does not envisage the likelihood of military *coup d'état* resulting from this question or in opposition to latest Czech proposals to Sudetens. The likelihood of such action would he thinks only arise if Government were to consent to measures definitely endangering the integrity of the State such as plebiscite.

Please inform the War Office.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

#### No. 821

*Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received September 10, 6.20 p.m.)*

*No. 427 Telegraphic [C 9520/65/18]*

BERLIN, September 10, 1938, 3.54 p.m.

Military Attaché returned last night from tour including Munich, Vienna, Prague and Dresden.

War psychosis appears marked in Bavaria and Austria. Less marked in Saxony and considerably less in Prague.

Details of military activity most difficult to obtain but providing . . .<sup>1</sup> appears to indicate that possibility exists of formation of reserve formations in each of 7th, 17th and 18th army corps areas. A large proportion of troops appear to be away from their permanent stations. They are probably concentrated at training grounds. No evidence obtained of any considerable concentration against Czechoslovakia being in progress. 2nd armoured division is still in Vienna area. There have been movements of troops in Northern Burgenland probably to cover Bratislava sector. Very large Hutten camps<sup>2</sup> are nearing completion at Linz, Florisdorf, Hollabrunn. Work on fortifications of frontier north and south of Gmund [Gmünd] proceeding very rapidly. Much road construction in progress north of Vienna. Main road Vienna-Prague will not be fit for heavy traffic north of Hollabrunn for at least 10 days.

Directors of large industrial firm in Vienna described conditions from point of view of industry as being already very like wartime. Railways refusing to meet commercial demands for goods traffic.

Tension very great in moderate circles in Bavaria and Austria, most responsible informants cannot bring themselves to believe that Government can be so mad as to start war. Saxony appears to have been less affected by

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. Hüttenlager, hutment camp.



military measures and though much discontent seems to be rife fear of war is not so marked. Opinion is general that danger at the moment lies just as much in unsatisfactory internal situation as in Sudeten problem.

Berlin press announces this morning that Berlin reservists of all categories who have recently been training at Jüterbog will be released from the colours in a few days.

Unable to obtain exact information regarding floods in Silesia but it appears clear that floods and damage done by them must temporarily affect any possible concentration of troops in that province.

According to information received from Swiss subject in Vienna leave has been stopped in Switzerland for Swiss officers.

Please inform War Office.

## No. 822

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 10, 5.15 p.m.)*  
*No. 236 Telegraphic [C 9559/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 10, 1938, 4.0 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

I at the same time handed to M. Bonnet a copy of your despatch No. 2032<sup>2</sup> of September 7 giving an account of your conversation that day with French Ambassador as I thought it so necessary to avoid any risk of misunderstanding. I propose to do the same in due course with your account of your conversation with M. Corbin of yesterday evening.<sup>3</sup>

In this connexion M. Bonnet said he would be grateful if I could let him have in writing warning that I conveyed to him orally on May 22 (my telegram No. 150).<sup>4</sup> He extracted from his drawer a French translation of your telegram No. 141<sup>5</sup> of May 22, which I had read out to him, but expressed a wish to have an official written communication. May I therefore give His Excellency a copy of your telegram?<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram reported that Sir E. Phipps had informed M. Bonnet that there was no truth in a statement in an English newspaper that His Majesty's Government 'had decided last night to warn Germany that Great Britain could not stand aside if the Czechs were attacked'.

<sup>2</sup> No. 798.

<sup>3</sup> No. 814.

<sup>4</sup> No. 286 in Volume I of this Series.

<sup>5</sup> No. 271 in Volume I of this Series.

<sup>6</sup> Sir E. Phipps was instructed on September 11, at 6.30 p.m. (telegram No. 267): 'You may give Minister for Foreign Affairs a copy of my telegram No. 141 of May 22. In doing so, you should, however, say that you are not repeating to him the representations contained therein, but are merely at his request handing him a copy.'

Sir N. Henderson (Nuremberg) to Viscount Halifax

(Received September 10, 6.20 p.m.)

Unnumbered. Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9538/1941/18]

NUREMBERG,<sup>1</sup> September 10, 1938

Problem with which we are faced is as follows.

Many good authorities believe Hitler is convinced Great Britain will not move if he resorts to force against Czechoslovakia.

All are convinced that any warning in nature of *démarche* of May 21 is likely to be fatal to prospects of peace.

How then is it possible to convince Hitler that in certain circumstances Great Britain could not stand aside without giving warning likely to have opposite effect to that intended?

If I say too little Hitler may persist in his alleged error, if I say too much I may destroy last prospect of peaceful issue.

My conversation with General [*sic*] Göring was friendly because after I had conveyed warning to him personally and . . .<sup>2</sup> he assured me that Germany would not be aggressive and that while air force could move at an hour's notice there was no question of its doing so unless Czechoslovak Government went on to extreme lengths of provocation, e.g. upsetting Hodza Government, murdering Henlein, or other Sudeten leaders, or ask [*sic*] Lord Runciman for . . .<sup>2</sup> to domestic affairs of independent country.

Although above constitutes extreme case Göring's whole conversation was opposed to theory of German aggression which as I had made clear would entail first French then our intervention.

Dr. Goebbels' attitude was also far from unfriendly and he volunteered that he would speak to Chancellor in the sense of my remarks regarding some allusion to readiness to co-operate with Great Britain in finding a pacific solution (see my letter to Wilson today).<sup>3</sup>

Neurath though not in touch with Hitler was definitely opposed to repetition of warning on line of May 21 and that view is shared by Baron Weizsäcker who is most insistent that Chancellor will not believe Great Britain will intervene but who recommends merely friendly message be sent him describing our difficulties and apprehensions.

Minister for Foreign Affairs naturally repeated remarks about May 21 but was not truculent regarding Germany's intentions and said that he was studying the latest M. Benes proposal.

I have spoken consistently to all the above and others on lines of your instructions and in sense of my remarks to Weizsäcker on my return from London. Henlein is here and can be counted on to exercise moderating influence and some of my conversations may make similar impression but

<sup>1</sup> This telegram appears to have been telephoned from Berlin.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix I.

other sources of information cannot be ignored. On the contrary . . .<sup>4</sup> he thought when decision rests with one man who keeps his counsel until the last moment they cannot be more implicitly believed than my impression and intuition. I am convinced Chancellor, whilst resolved to act if no genuine solution is achieved, has not yet decided what this action is to be or when it is to be taken. Army, air force, etc., are ready to strike if word is given and great majority of rumours current derive therefrom. My conviction is that in the unbalanced state of mind in which I think he is, any solemn warning which he will regard as repetition of May 21 however worded will drive him to the very action which we seek to prevent. Not only is that my earnest opinion but I also feel that even if such warning did induce (which I much doubt, if he has already decided) Chancellor to abstain for the moment it will only make crisis still more acute after brief period of a month.

No secret is possible in Nuremberg and Germans are already aware that messenger came from London and secretary from Berlin. To an enquiry from Neurath and Weizsäcker I have replied that I have instructions of a kind but I have been told not to carry them out unless circumstances alter and that while greatly disturbed by danger inherent in the situation His Majesty's Government remain convinced for the moment of sincerity of Chancellor's declared desire to achieve pacific solution.

<sup>4</sup> The text is here uncertain.

#### No. 824

*Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Lindsay (Washington)*  
*No. 619 Telegraphic [C 9512/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 10, 1938, 7.0 p.m.*

The United States Ambassador called this morning to ask whether I had any further information to give him. I told him of the discussions that we had had yesterday upon the subject of sending a further message to the German Government, emphasising the gravity of the consequences that in our judgment must follow any violent action on their part. We had actually sent further instructions to our Ambassador, but he was not acting upon them until we had had time to consider his report on the interviews that he had had with members of the German Government at Nuremberg. This we hoped to have available this afternoon and if I had any further information for the Ambassador this evening I would let him know.

2. The Ambassador felt that it was essential to take every possible step to avoid misunderstanding in Herr Hitler's mind and that only overwhelming argument would suffice to prevent us sending the final warning that we had in mind. He thought we had been quite right to take the action that we had in regard to the Fleet measures and wondered whether over the weekend it might not be possible for the Soviet Government to make some movement

that would compel attention, such as concentration of aeroplanes near the frontier.

3. We then had some discussion as to the probable course of public feeling both here and in America in the event of resort to force by Herr Hitler. The Ambassador said American opinion was much more excited against Germany now than he had ever known it; in his own words 'twenty times as excited as in 1914'. If war should come, he anticipated that the immediate reaction would be a desire to keep out of it, but that, if we were drawn into it and, for example, London was bombed, he thought there would be a strong revulsion of feeling and that the history of the last war would be repeated, leading a good deal more rapidly than in the last war to American intervention. He personally thought it would be very difficult for us to keep out of it, but agreed that it was difficult at this stage to predict, in the light of the complete uncertainty as to how events would develop, in what way public opinion would move.

Repeated to Paris, Prague and Berlin.

#### No. 825

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Nuremberg)*<sup>1</sup>  
*Unnumbered. Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9656/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 10, 1938, 8.0 p.m.*

In view of strong expression of opinion in your communications<sup>2</sup> received today, and on understanding that you have in fact already conveyed to Herr von Ribbentrop and others substance of what you were instructed to say in my telegram of yesterday,<sup>3</sup> and that you are clear they can be under no misapprehension, I agree you need make no further communication.

We will of course continue to keep situation under close consideration here.

Subject to above you are now free to return to Berlin. Telegraph your movements.

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was telephoned to Nuremberg and also telephoned to Berlin with instructions to telephone it on.

<sup>2</sup> See Nos. 819 and 823.

<sup>3</sup> No. 815.

#### No. 826

*Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
*No. 428 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9521/1941/18]*

BERLIN, *September 10, 1938, 8.0 p.m.*

Military Attaché saw director of one of the largest German armament firms this morning. While stressing the fact that he and his fellow directors were most anxious as to the outcome of present situation the latter said they were reasonably convinced that a solution without war would be found.

He thought it most unlikely that any decision to make war had yet been taken as his firm had lately received an order to increase their export trade and nothing had been done to indicate that they might shortly be called upon to go to war production.

Please inform War Office.

No. 827

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*  
*No. 360 Telegraphic [C 9556/9532/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 10, 1938, 11.30 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

1. The German Naval Attaché called on the Director of Naval Intelligence this morning to enquire as to the significance of what he termed the alarming naval measures announced in the press in order that he might report to the German Government. He expressed his concern at the information which had been published, repeatedly referring to these measures as being the last step of mobilisation.

2. The Director of Naval Intelligence explained to him that the naval movements in question resulted from the general disturbed situation in Europe, and were very limited in scope.

3. The Attaché referred to the change in the home flotilla programme affecting the 'Royal Oak'. The Director of Naval Intelligence stated that an explanation of this had been given to the press, but the Attaché replied that this explanation would not satisfy a naval officer.

4. He asked whether other preparations would be made, and insisted that the German Admiralty had made no preparations whatever, adding that it was unusual to take one's guns up before one was menaced. The Director of Naval Intelligence replied that he could not commit himself to any statement that no other measures would be taken, but explained that the reserves had not been called up and that no other measures had been taken.

5. The Attaché confined himself entirely to the naval aspect of the question and argued that, as the German navy was not menacing the British navy, it seemed an extraordinary thing that these steps should have been taken. In order to make the general situation clear to the Attaché the Director of Naval Intelligence referred a number of times to the Prime Minister's speech of 24th March,<sup>2</sup> and to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's speech at Lanark.<sup>3</sup> He told the Attaché that everyone in this country realised that if fighting broke out in Central Europe, no one knew where it might end.

6. At the end of the interview the Attaché stated that no one in Germany

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram reported an announcement made to the press regarding certain naval measures taken by His Majesty's Government.

<sup>2</sup> See No. 113 in Volume I of this Series.

<sup>3</sup> See No. 704.

believed that Great Britain would, in any circumstances, come in against Germany. So far as he himself was concerned, he stated twice that he now, for the first time, understood this possibility. He was deeply moved at the prospect.

**No. 828**

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 11)*

*No. 585 Saving: Telegraphic [C 9541/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 10, 1938

Your telegram No. 236 Saving<sup>1</sup> of September 7.

I informed the Minister for Foreign Affairs accordingly this morning.

M. Bonnet repeated what he has so often said to me, viz.: that the French Government would accept and support any plan for a settlement of the Sudeten problem that either His Majesty's Government or Lord Runciman might put forward.

<sup>1</sup> No. 797.

**No. 829**

*Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 13)*

*No. 73 Saving: Telegraphic [C9648/5302/18]*

WARSAW, September 10, 1938

It may be useful if I briefly recapitulate my views on the attitude of Poland to the Czechoslovak crisis.

Since, as in most countries, opinions differ regarding the rights and wrongs of the case and the ultimate intentions of Germany, I shall endeavour to give, not the views of individual Polish statesmen, but the broad lines of self-interest (whether enlightened or not), and of public opinion, with which any Polish Government must reckon.

There is little sympathy here with the Czechoslovaks as a people, or with the Czechoslovak Government in its present predicament. Any community of feeling as between two Slav peoples is conspicuous by its absence, except as regards the aspirations of the Slovaks. Moreover, the Polish Governmental press campaign has kept alive the resentment felt at the events of 1919 and 1920 when the Czechs not only failed to give Poland any help against the Bolshevik invaders, but prevented French munitions from arriving through Czechoslovakia and took the opportunity to seize the area round Teschen.

Nor do the Poles feel the same horror of Nazism as is felt in democratic countries. No doubt there is such a feeling among socialists and peasants, but this does not extend to the ruling classes; and even among the peasants there is a dislike of Jews which counterbalances the disgust with which other countries regard the manifestations of German anti-Semitism.

At the same time the Poles by racial instinct and historical experience dislike the Germans. This feeling is naturally most intense in the frontier

districts, and is a very strong reason why any Polish Government would find it difficult to induce Poland actively to take the German side. It would, however, be a mistake to think that Poland is afraid of Germany at the present time, though it naturally does not wish to challenge or provoke Germany.

The one eventuality which might throw Poland into the German camp would be any attempt by the U.S.S.R. to send help to Czechoslovakia across Poland, for the U.S.S.R. is violently disliked and distrusted by the governing classes in Poland. The Soviet régime is identified in their minds with (1) the hated Russian oppressor; (2) the Komintern; (3) Jewry; and (4) anti-Christ. The proximity of the U.S.S.R. and its supposed influence in Czechoslovakia therefore complicates the problem, even for those Polish circles which are pro-French and pro-British. In my view, should the U.S.S.R. attempt to send help to Czechoslovakia through Poland this would be sufficient to ensure the Polish Government unitedly deciding to oppose the advance of Russian forces. It is argued that once Soviet armies were on Polish soil another war would be necessary to turn them out even if Poland and Russia were members of an anti-German alliance. Should Russian help be confined to sending aeroplanes across Poland the effect on public opinion would be equally bad, and active measures would probably be taken to prevent any such passage.

The Polish Government is therefore likely for both internal and external reasons to endeavour to remain neutral as long as possible in the event of conflict between Germany and Czechoslovakia. I do not think that Poland would at once attempt to occupy the part of Czechoslovakia inhabited by a Polish minority, though troops would probably be moved to the frontier. This action would also serve as a warning to Germany not to invade Polish Silesia.

The Polish Government is presumably well aware, as part of the press has pointed out, that it would be extremely difficult to maintain neutrality for long, especially if France and Great Britain were involved, but their position is such that they could hardly take a more decided line without knowing what France, Great Britain and Russia intend to do.

Given their long and exposed frontier, and the vulnerability of the industrial area of Silesia, of Gdynia and the sea-coast, and of the Corridor, they cannot afford to draw upon themselves the wrath of Germany, a danger far more immediate than the 'Drang nach Süd-Osten'.

I think they are fully alive to the danger of German expansion, but in the general disillusion regarding collective security they are content, with comparatively calm nerves, to wait and see. Probably the greatest service Poland could render in the early stages of a conflict would be by partial mobilisation to prevent Germany from denuding her Eastern frontier and East Prussia of troops.

If France and Great Britain were involved it is probable that public opinion would eventually lead the Polish Government to associate itself with them, provided that the U.S.S.R. did not complicate matters.

I may add that the French Ambassador agrees in general with these views and I took the opportunity of a visit from him this morning to suggest that it was essential that every effort should be made in Moscow to prevent the Soviet Union taking any measure which might determine Poland to throw herself into the German camp.

Repeated to Berlin and Moscow.

Repeated by Foreign Office to Paris and Prague.

No. 830

*Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 11, 1.55 p.m.)

No. 431 *Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9523/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 11, 1938

Following is my appreciation of the situation here:—

Public opinion is much alarmed at German military measures which as they increase in scope, are becoming more widely known. There is a general fear that an attack on Czechoslovakia may lead to a European war which Germany would be likely to lose.

Feeling is strong against war but the nation is helpless in the grip of the Nazi system.

Nuremberg speeches have two objects in view, first, to stiffen German morale by emphasising strength of Germany. It is significant that last night's wireless broadcast a statement from Nuremberg proving that food reserves were adequate for a long war. Second object is to warn Western Powers against fighting Germany. As far as this is concerned I regard Göring's speech as bluff. At the time of Rhineland occupation he used similar language to Sir E. Phipps though he and General Milch afterwards admitted in private that they had been sleepless with terror. On this occasion it appears from reliable information that Göring does not regard Germany's prospects in a general war too optimistically.

It is clear from Göring's speech that he envisages *possibility* of war with England. Degree of possibility is apparently a matter of opinion but in any case reiteration of our warning that the possibility exists will not add to Germany's knowledge and is only likely to strengthen extremists here who will impress on Herr Hitler that he will be represented once more as having suffered a resounding diplomatic defeat at the hands of the Western Powers.

On the other hand acceptance of the Karlsbad programme could be hailed here as a German diplomatic victory. Herr Hitler does not believe Czechs will surrender so much but the door is being kept open for this contingency.

There is absolutely no sign here of any deep public animosity to the Czechs or Western Powers. The people are like sheep being led to the slaughter. If war breaks out they will march and do their duty for some time at least.

Their subsequent behaviour will depend on developments.

Repeated to Prague.



*Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 11, 2.50 p.m.)

*No. 432 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9524/65/18]*

BERLIN, September 11, 1938

Your telegram No. 361.<sup>1</sup>

...<sup>2</sup> reports that War Office was shut today.<sup>3</sup>

Military Attaché called on head of Attaché Gruppe at his residence.

In reply to Military Attaché's direct enquiry regarding reported concentrations head of Attaché Gruppe stated that he could not say more than that he was quite certain that no such concentrations had taken place but promised to make further enquiries and inform Military Attaché. He presumed that Military Attaché had not seen anything unusual during his tour in Austria. Military Attaché concurred with reservation that he had not left main route.

Military Attaché emphasised that Germans had only themselves to blame for rumours that are circulating and pointed out that he had hitherto been given only vaguest information in spite of several enquiries. But he had been more than once told (*sic*)<sup>4</sup> that German military programme for autumn was so extensive as to form a disturbing and ill-timed factor in present tense situation.

Head of Attachés replied that he did not realise how little information Military Attaché had actually received. He could now tell him that a total of 12 divisions were now employed on construction of defences on western front as far north as Belgian frontier. In addition 3 divisions were now doing their training. These 3 would be discharged on or about September 15 and four more would then be formed.<sup>5</sup> Military Attaché said that it was regrettable that head of Attachés had not been franker with him before. If tranquil atmosphere was really desired by Germans they must be frank about any abnormal military measures. Head of Attachés replied that he would always be as frank as he could be so long as security of the State was not involved.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. In this telegram, despatched on September 10 at 11.30 p.m., Sir N. Henderson was informed that: 'It is stated in the press here to-day that at least 200,000 men have been concentrated in a belt of territory of a depth not greater than 50 miles along the German side of the former Austro-Czechoslovak frontier. It is also reported that strong motorised units and mechanised artillery are concentrated in a second zone at the back of the first line, and not more than 100 miles from the Czechoslovak border.' Sir N. Henderson was therefore instructed to ask his Military Attaché 'to enquire of the German military authorities as to the truth of these reports. If his enquiry should provoke any resentment, it would be pertinent for him to refer to the visit of the German Naval Attaché to the Admiralty today to ask about our own extremely limited naval measures (see my immediately preceding telegram [No. 827]).'

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>3</sup> September 11 was a Sunday.

<sup>4</sup> This *sic* appears in the file copy of this telegram.

<sup>5</sup> In a subsequent telegram, No. 437 of September 11, Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes reported that the head of the Attaché Group had telephoned to confirm the information given to the Military Attaché.

Head of Attachés appeared far less concerned at serious possibilities of the situation than he has been on previous occasions. He made no attempt to stress its danger as hitherto and did his best to convince the Military Attaché of comparatively innocuous scope of reserve training programme.

Military Attaché is seeing General von Tippelskirch tomorrow.  
Please inform the War Office.

No. 832

*Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 11, 2.55 p.m.)

No. 434 *Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9533/65/18]*

BERLIN, September 11, 1938

Your telegram No. 358.<sup>1</sup>

French Ambassador bases his report mainly on the information received through domestic staff of one of his Consuls. He admitted he had no knowledge of troops being confined to barracks but said that in his opinion the first stage of 'alerte' had been reached and that troops destined for action in Czechoslovakia were ready to move on the lifting of a finger.

Military Attaché informs me that there is no evidence in Berlin of a state of 'alerte' and that the War Office is closed today.

French Ambassador also expressed the opinion that whatever Herr Hitler might say at Nuremberg on Monday situation would be in suspense and no action taken until next week-end in view of the necessity for the various leaders and departmental headquarters to disperse from Nuremberg and return to their posts.

French Ambassador also considers sands have run out almost, but not quite run out [*sic*].

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. In this telegram Sir N. Henderson was asked whether he had any confirmation of the report by the French Ambassador in Berlin given in No. 807.

No. 833

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 11, 5.15 p.m.)*  
No. 237 *Telegraphic [C 9560/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 11, 1938, 4.0 p.m.

Secretary-General Ministry of Foreign Affairs tells me that he has heard from a really trustworthy source that Hitler, being convinced of British abstention, has decided to strike against Czechoslovakia, probably about September 24 and eventually to continue a German advance as far as Bucharest. Hitler's idea is to lull us to sleep by not making any serious proposals or demands in his speech tomorrow and to allow Prague negotiations to continue.

M. Léger has reason to believe that in this case there is a grave and very

real danger of some murderous attack on Henlein or even on Lord Runciman from a supposedly Czech quarter, engineered by the Germans, with a view to alienating British, and indeed world, sympathies from Czechoslovakia. This would enable Hitler to carry out the first part of his above-mentioned scheme with certainty of British neutrality.

M. Léger feels personally that if Hitler's speech tomorrow proves as indefinite as seems likely it will be essential, in the interests of peace, to propose publicly and almost immediately the summoning of a Four Power conference between Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy. Such a conference should discuss a general settlement of all outstanding questions and grievances and would seem to offer the last chance of peace.

M. Léger thinks, speaking confidentially, that M. Bonnet would be prepared for France to propose summoning of such a conference, but he doubts whether he could persuade M. Daladier, who would probably fear strong opposition on the left in France. M. Léger assured me, however, that if plan were put forward by His Majesty's Government he was absolutely certain that French Government would accept it. Poland, he thinks, should not be included for then Russia would have to be invited also, and that would render acceptance by Germany and Italy practically out of the question.

Repeated to Berlin and Prague.

#### No. 834

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 11, 7.50 p.m.)*  
*No. 238 Telegraphic [C 9561/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 11, 1938, 5.57 p.m.

Your telegram No. 264.<sup>1</sup>

In the absence of Minister for Foreign Affairs at Geneva, whence he is expected to return on September 12, I thought it advisable to read the above slowly in French to Secretary-General this morning.

M. Léger was greatly perturbed by sentence in paragraph 8:—'Whatever we might feel about any action that Germany might take in Czechoslovakia, I did not think British opinion would be prepared, any more than I thought His Majesty's Government would be prepared, to enter upon hostilities with Germany on account of aggression by Germany on Czechoslovakia.'

I read over the whole paragraph to him both in French and in English, and M. Léger declared that this sentence indicated a distinct change for the worse in the attitude of His Majesty's Government and that if it were officially maintained, it seemed incompatible with our wish to be previously consulted by the French Government before they embarked upon any measures that must involve them in war.

I pointed out that your statement to M. Corbin did not in any way imply a change in the often expressed declaration of His Majesty's Government

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram gave a slightly shorter version of the interview reported in No. 814. The paragraph numbers in the telegram correspond to those in the despatch.

that if, as a result of German aggression on Czechoslovakia, France came to the latter's assistance, it was probable that Great Britain would not be able to stand aside. But M. Léger would not be consoled.

I then suggested that we should see what M. Corbin had reported you as saying in this part of his conversation with Your Lordship.

The relevant telegram was brought and M. Corbin's account read as follows:—

‘La position britannique n'était pas pareille à celle du gouvernement français. L'Angleterre n'est liée par aucun engagement avec la Tchécoslovaquie. Dans le cas où la France se trouverait dans l'obligation de venir au secours de la Tchécoslovaquie on se trouverait devant une situation nouvelle, en raison de laquelle l'Angleterre serait sans doute amenée à participer au conflit dans un délai qui ne pourrait être évidemment fixé à l'avance.

‘Les circonstances seraient appelées elles-mêmes à jouer un rôle important pour la décision que pourraient être appelés à prendre le gouvernement britannique et les Dominions.’

### No. 835

*United Kingdom Delegation<sup>1</sup> (Geneva) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 11, 8.45 p.m.)  
*No. 26 Telegraphic [C 9590/1941/18]*

GENEVA, September 11, 1938, 7.13 p.m.

Following from Mr. Butler for Secretary of State.

1. Captain Wallace, Mr. Stevenson and I saw M. Bonnet at his hotel this morning at his request. During the course of a friendly conversation we discussed first the general situation in Central Europe which was clearly his main preoccupation, and then the question of reform of the Covenant and certain possible repercussions of Central European situation on events here.

2. He said that what he regarded as an already extremely serious situation had been aggravated by recent articles in ‘The Times’ and by an official *démenti* of a statement in ‘The Daily Mail’ that His Majesty's Government proposed to approach Herr Hitler.<sup>2</sup> He had been further depressed by President Roosevelt's recent announcement.<sup>3</sup> He compared the present situation with that of 1914 of which he had had intimate experience and said that he had hoped that His Majesty's Government would give a definite expression of their intention to come in if Germany were to adopt forcible action against Czechoslovakia. In reply to his question as to the attitude of His Majesty's Government we referred him to your recent talk with M. Corbin and to the previous statements of the Prime Minister. He obviously

<sup>1</sup> To the 19th Assembly of the League of Nations.

<sup>2</sup> See No. 837, note 1.

<sup>3</sup> On September 9 President Roosevelt had referred to Press speculations that the United States was aligning itself with Britain and France in a ‘stop Hitler’ bloc as ‘100 per cent. wrong’.

did not seem to expect any further elaboration of policy of His Majesty's Government at this interview. According to his information Italy would not remain neutral and in these circumstances for France to envisage a war on three fronts, Spanish, Italian and German, would be equivalent to jumping from the Eiffel Tower and he made it clear that France proposed to do nothing of the kind. Poland had informed him that while they proposed to remain neutral in the event of German aggression against Czechoslovakia they would definitely resist passage of Russian troops to assist Czechoslovakia.

3. We questioned him on French attitude to our proposals regarding League reform. He said that the French view was not in favour of raising these questions at the present time. He did not wish it to appear that at this critical moment the League was in any way weakening itself. We pointed out that our proposal on the subject of Article 11 was in fact one for strengthening the Covenant. He said that M. Litvinov had been very excited about this in a conversation he had just had with him, but he, M. Bonnet, was inclined to take our view. He asked for further explanation of what we intended should be the procedure prior to enforcing Article 16 which we gave him. On the subject of Article 19 he agreed with all opinion we have collected here from his experts, M. Litvinov and Little Entente, that it would be wiser not to discuss this article at all just now. When questioned further as to whether it would not be wise to proceed with our proposals in general terms in the speech which will have to be made at the Assembly, he agreed that they could be presented with tact in such a way that would not arouse his fundamental objection but that he still would prefer to leave these questions alone. We are awaiting an answer to the letter I sent you on this subject and have meanwhile been redrafting certain portions of the speech in the sense we suggested.

4. M. Bonnet told us that in the course of a conversation which he had just had with M. Litvinov the latter had referred to the proposal he had made to the French Government that the Soviet Union would be willing to co-operate with France and the United Kingdom in a joint note to Berlin. Evidently M. Litvinov was disappointed that we were not likely to favour this proposal and M. Bonnet had gathered that he would like to get the Czech question discussed at Geneva by an *ad hoc* committee. This seems to entail putting this question on the agenda of either the Council or the Assembly. M. Bonnet laid great emphasis on the obvious disadvantages of such a development with which we warmly agreed. Let us hope no more will come of this idea. If matter had to be discussed by the Council he said that he would infinitely prefer the Council to meet in London or in Paris where foreign ministers concerned would handle the question.

6.<sup>4</sup> M. Bonnet is returning to Paris tonight and hopes to come back here on Wednesday and is naturally extremely keen for you to come out if only for a short time.

<sup>4</sup> This paragraph should be numbered 5.

*Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Lindsay (Washington)**No. 749 [C 9596/1941/18]*FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 11, 1938*

Sir,

The United States Ambassador came to see me this morning, in order to discuss the situation in regard to the Czechoslovak question.

2. I told His Excellency the present position, so far as our information went, and explained that we had yesterday afternoon received from Nuremberg the reports from Sir N. Henderson of which I had spoken to Mr. Kennedy at our last interview. These reports were to the effect that Sir N. Henderson had spoken strongly to all the principal German leaders—except Herr Hitler himself—on the lines of the formal communication which had been sent to him to deliver; that he was confident that the position of His Majesty's Government was absolutely clear to them; and that to make the official *démarche* to the German Government suggested in my telegram No. 354<sup>1</sup> to Berlin would, in his view and in that of various German friends who wished to restrain Herr Hitler, be disastrous and likely to produce the worst effect.

3. In the face of this considered advice from our Ambassador, we had told the latter that, in view of the emphatic opinions which he had expressed, and on the understanding that he had, in fact, already conveyed to Herr von Ribbentrop and other responsible German leaders the substance of what he had been instructed to say in my telegram No. 354 and that he was clear that the German authorities could be under no misapprehension, we agreed that he need make no further communication at present to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. We had added that, in these circumstances, we did not wish to ask Sir N. Henderson to remain any longer in Nuremberg, and we had since heard that he was due to return to Berlin early to-morrow morning.

4. I then referred to the measures taken recently in connexion with the Fleet. I told Mr. Kennedy that I presumed that he would have seen a report of these movements in yesterday's papers. The measures in themselves were of limited scope, but they had apparently produced considerable effect in Germany. The German Naval Attaché had called at the Admiralty yesterday to enquire as to the significance of these measures, and had expressed considerable concern at the steps taken, which he professed to regard as being the last step of mobilisation. It had been explained to the Naval Attaché that the relatively small movements in question had been taken in consequence of the generally disturbed situation in Europe, and he had been reminded of what had been said by the Prime Minister on the 24th March and the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the 27th August about the impossibility of saying where war, if it once broke out, would end, or how many Governments might become involved. The Naval Attaché had not appeared

<sup>1</sup> No. 815.

to derive much comfort from these explanations and had declared that no one in Germany believed that Great Britain would in any circumstances come in against Germany. Captain Siemens had said more than once that, as far as he himself was concerned, he now for the first time understood this possibility. He had seemed deeply concerned at the prospect.

5. I went on to explain to the Ambassador that His Majesty's Government were considering the possibility of taking further naval measures on similar lines. No decision had, however, yet been taken on this point. Mr. Kennedy thanked me for this information and expressed the view that the Fleet movements had had a useful effect. He added that two American cruisers were on their way to British waters, a fact of which he thought some political use might perhaps be made.

6. The Ambassador did not think that, in the face of the strong feelings expressed by Sir N. Henderson, we could have done more in the way of warning the German authorities about the attitude of this country.

7. Finally, Mr. Kennedy suggested that it might be useful were he to call on the Prime Minister this evening in order to encourage German speculation regarding the fact that our two countries were apparently keeping in such close touch. I welcomed the Ambassador's suggestion and told him that I had no doubt that the Prime Minister would be glad to see him quite apart from the political value which his visit might have in the eyes of the outside world.

I am, &c.,  
HALIFAX

No. 837

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 12, 1.0 p.m.)

No. 438 *Telegraphic*: by telephone [C 9594/1941/18]

BERLIN, September 12, 1938

I left Nuremberg at midnight and returned to Berlin this morning.

Inasmuch as everything depends on the psychology of one abnormal individual I can speak with no certitude except as regards acute seriousness of the situation and absolute necessity for the earliest possible clarification of the situation at Prague.

Though I only had a single brief conversation in the midst of my colleagues with Herr Hitler who was amicable but obviously unwilling to discuss politics, I studied him closely at a distance. He is in a condition of extreme nervous tension which he was unable to relax even when addressing his Hitler Youth. His abnormality seemed to me greater than ever.

I believe he definitely contemplates early, perhaps almost immediate, action of some sort but my impression yesterday morning was that in his speech today he would burn no boats. But even if it be comparatively moderate it will not mean that decision is affected, though I doubt if he has

yet decided on the form of action which he is leaving to depend on reactions abroad and at Prague to his speech.

Baron von Neurath whom I saw yesterday afternoon entirely shared this view but Herr Hitler has not received him this time at Nuremberg nor indeed the German Ambassador in London, who has not seen him at all since he returned here. These two facts in themselves are symptomatic. On the other hand Baron von Neurath told me he had been in touch with many others who would have the opportunity of seeing Herr Hitler. Dr. Goebbels, for instance, after my first conversation with the latter had asked him whether he believed my statement that Great Britain would inevitably be involved if France became so. Baron von Neurath told me he had left Dr. Goebbels in no doubt whatever about this fact. My Polish, French and Italian colleagues have all used similar language.

Herr Hitler's attitude is that of the deaf adder who stoppeth her ears. Either he imagines that he is listening to voices from on high or, as Baron von Neurath is inclined to think, is determined to meet defeatism of others by an appearance of personal confidence which at heart he may not really possess. State Secretary does not however share Baron von Neurath's comparative optimism in this respect. One noteworthy aspect of Nuremberg was the black pessimism of all members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from the highest and nearest to Herr von Ribbentrop downwards. To some of my colleagues their language about the latter was violent to a point of danger to themselves. None trust him. With me Herr von Ribbentrop was less unreasonable than usual and since he is purely a yes-man I derived some slight consolation from that fact, but he is certainly giving no good advice to Herr Hitler. Himmler is probably another extremist but my impression was that neither Field-Marshal Göring nor Dr. Goebbels at heart wish to take risks. They would of course blindly follow their leader whatever he may ultimately decide. Dr. Goebbels, to whom I spoke again yesterday, laid stress on great urgency of immediate action at Prague lest the situation get out of hand in Czechoslovakia and the patience of Herr Hitler be exhausted here but I did not derive the impression of bellicosity. Field-Marshal Göring is loud-mouthed and virulent but he is less untrustworthy than Dr. Goebbels and his plans for shooting at end of September are genuine and quite contrary to even problematical concealment of belief in the possibility of invasions this month. He even spoke of negotiations dragging on till next spring. Both may be practising deep deception but I doubt if anybody quite knows yet what Herr Hitler himself proposes to say tonight.

I would repeat however that what [*sic*] Herr Hitler actually says and even if he is more moderate than is anticipated, which I was inclined to believe, this will not mean any real alleviation of the crisis. That can come alone from some final plan at Prague which His Majesty's Government can support, and if it is to serve a purpose, then immediately.

Vague news of Prime Minister's statement<sup>1</sup> to British journalists reached

<sup>1</sup> On September 10 a telegram had been sent to H.M. Representatives in Paris, Berlin, and Prague informing them that in view of certain reports in the British Press to the effect



Nuremberg only just before I left and I hesitate therefore to make any decided prediction as to the speech tonight. Much will depend on Herr Hitler's reaction to that statement. It may well give him pause and much will depend on actual wording though my best-informed colleagues feared that in form quoted at Nuremberg it would induce Herr Hitler to answer back and prevent him from showing even comparative moderation lest it be interpreted by German people and the foreign world as having been forced upon him by public warning from abroad. The tone of the British press today is also likely to influence Herr Hitler tonight.

that the British Government had decided to send a formal Note to Berlin an official statement was being issued to the Press that: 'in view of statements, which have appeared in the last day or so, regarding reported decisions of Ministers, it can be stated authoritatively that no such statements should be regarded as authentic.' The telegram said further that the Prime Minister would see representatives of the Press on September 11. For the Prime Minister's statement to the British Press, see Appendix III. See also No. 842.

### No. 838

*Viscount Chilston (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 12, 1.50 p.m.)  
No. 167 Telegraphic [C 9595/1941/18]

MOSCOW, September 12, 1938, 1.58 p.m.

German Military and Naval Attachés and such of diplomatic staff as were not already on leave, with the exception of Counsellor, who is now left alone in charge of Embassy, have departed for Germany.

Repeated to Berlin.

### No. 839

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 12, 6.15 p.m.)  
No. 439 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9619/1941/18]

BERLIN, September 12, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

The substance of my language to all at Nuremberg was based on that reported in my telegrams Nos. 403<sup>2</sup> and 405<sup>3</sup> and as laid down in your telegram No. 347.<sup>4</sup> I stressed also the stupidity of a war which whoever was victorious would only benefit ultimately Germany's own enemies and necessity of Anglo-German co-operation as procedure which might lead to better things. I emphasized my conviction in the sincerity of Hitler's repeated assurances of a will to peace and much besides.

<sup>1</sup> No. 837.

<sup>3</sup> No. 738.

<sup>2</sup> No. 736.

<sup>4</sup> No. 784.

I have never for a moment doubted Hitler's decision to secure settlement of Sudeten question (? on that account).<sup>5</sup> But I have always believed he aimed at securing this object by bluff and peaceful methods if he could and only by actual war with Czechoslovakia if he could not. I am still disinclined short of serious incidents to believe in any sudden . . .<sup>5</sup> to risks from [*sic*] which, however much he stops his ears, he must nevertheless be alive. It is true however driven by megalomania inspired by military force which he has built up etc., he may have crossed the border-line of insanity. In that sense it is unlikely any warning from us will avail, on the other hand there may still be large amount of bluff in preparations which he is making. My language and activities at Nuremberg were consequently based on . . .<sup>5</sup> that while he has decided on some form of action or ultimatum, he had not finally decided what form. I was inclined to believe a loophole would be left in his speech for some form of co-operation with Great Britain, and that provided this could be achieved, that our best course was to await (? his)<sup>5</sup> speech after I had done my best at Nuremberg to influence him through as many friends as might be accessible to keep his speech within such bounds. I believed that this could best be achieved by avoidance of any repetition of a public warning or threat and it was on this general ground that I expressed myself so strongly against any official communication, the secrecy (? of which)<sup>5</sup> could scarcely be kept.

Nevertheless while I realized Hitler's speech today would in effect settle nothing though it might as I hoped still leave the door open for further diplomatic action, I prepared an alternative suggestion for possible use after that speech and in it a public or official warning. I venture to submit it, though I cannot definitely recommend it until contents of Hitler's speech are known as well as his reaction to Prime Minister's reported statement to British press,<sup>6</sup> text of which I do not yet know.

My suggestion would have been the following: that Prime Minister should address personal letter to Chancellor to be enclosed [? in] one from yourself to Ribbentrop.

Letter of Prime Minister might be composed under following (? heads):<sup>5</sup> reference to 1914 and reproach to Great Britain for not having made her position known beforehand.

No desire to interfere in affairs which concern Germany but obliged to explain British standpoint which Prime Minister represents and which conscience, sense of responsibility to present generation and history compels [*sic*] him to make clear.

Close relations between France and Great Britain make him acquainted with France's position which is one of treaty obligation and honour. British attitude if France is compelled to go to war.

Duty to abide by letter [*sic*, ? latter] lest Great Britain dragged into war which she would detest but fight if France came in would cease to be one between Sudetens (whose rights we appreciate) and Czechs. Nevertheless better to speak straight out now than wait till too late.

<sup>5</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>6</sup> See No. 837, note 1.

I still venture to put this suggestion forward in case it may prove serviceable. Testimony of its delivery would be absolutely essential to chance of its good effect.

No. 840

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 12, 7.20 p.m.)

No. 440 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9820/1941/18]

BERLIN, September 12, 1938

Following are a few additional observations of leading personalities at Nuremberg: Germany could never tolerate indefinitely a hostile Czechoslovakia. If the latter wished to exist as an independent State it must be within German political and economic orbit. There could be no peace in Europe or Germany so long as Czechoslovakia formed part of combination hostile to Germany. (F.-M. Göring.)

If Germany had another good harvest she would be next year an exporter of wheat instead of an importer. She had supplies to last her for a year and blockade would prove unavailing. (F.-M. Göring and much more in same strain.)

Plebiscite was now only solution which could save the situation. (State Secretary.)

(Above view also held by von Neurath though latter unlike State Secretary was more ready to accept objections to plebiscite and to agree that fullest autonomy would be better course if it were granted at once.)

Henlein (whom he saw at Nuremberg) was still very moderate but afraid lest his radical wing would shortly get upper hand if solution were not reached immediately. (Baron von Neurath.)

M. Benes' speech on Saturday was quite useless and meant nothing and would satisfy nobody. (Dr. Goebbels.)

(When I protested that it seemed to me to be conciliatory Dr. Goebbels admitted that if it had been made four months ago it would have produced different effect. Result of every concession having had to be grudgingly extorted had been to convince German Government that no plan would now be honestly executed.)

Situation was definitely serious and there was not a moment to be lost. Hitler had not modified his opinion that Great Britain would not go to war. (State Secretary.)

Moscow is behind all the Czech uncompromisingness. (General view.)

No. 841

*Sir R. Lindsay (Washington) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 13, 9.30 a.m.)  
*No. 342 Telegraphic [C 9711/1941/18]*

WASHINGTON, September 12, 1938, 11.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 619.<sup>1</sup>

I agree with the diagnosis of American feeling given you by United States Ambassador and it coincides generally with the forecast in my despatch No. 619.<sup>2</sup> Since it was written, favourable trend has further developed but of course main factors of situation remain unchanged. Especially it should be remembered that first reaction here will be strong desire to avoid participation in war.

Yet opinion here, like that of United States Ambassador, is in favour of His Majesty's Government making a strong stand against German aggression and I anticipate that any compromise with it may bring about a certain let-down of American friendliness as happened over sanctions and over resignation of your predecessor. Too much importance must not be attached to this. It is more an argument in favour of firmness than one against a wise accommodation. For the latter there will always be overwhelming arguments compared to which fluctuations of American public opinion will weigh little. If accommodation is really wise, we should be able to recover any ground lost.

I hear that a few days ago the President said to a French visitor 'you may count on us for everything except troops and loans'. This is a true reflection of his own feelings but he ought to have added a reservation 'subject to dictates of our public opinion and our own domestic politics'. If United States comes into a war, as I and many think is likely, it will take far less than two and a half years but it will seem very long to us. It will be disgust more than anything else that would bring them in. The President (? has)<sup>3</sup> already been aroused by Germany's brutal diplomacy and hostilities of the same character would only accelerate the process thereto.

<sup>1</sup> No. 824.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. This despatch of July 4 reviewed public opinion in the U.S. along the lines indicated in the text.

<sup>3</sup> The text is here uncertain.

No. 842

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*  
*No. 240 Saving: Telegraphic [C 9561/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 12, 1938

Your telegram No. 238.<sup>1</sup>

I am distressed and not a little surprised at the effect upon M. Léger of my interview with French Ambassador on September 9.<sup>2</sup>

M. Léger seems to have concentrated on one particular passage apart

<sup>1</sup> No. 834.

<sup>2</sup> No. 814.

from its context, and to ignore other observations which I made to the French Ambassador both on that occasion and in my previous interview with him on September 7.<sup>3</sup>

The passage to which M. Léger takes exception is that in which I expressed doubt whether His Majesty's Government 'would be prepared to enter upon hostilities with Germany on account of aggression by Germany on Czechoslovakia'.

On September 7 I had said plainly 'I did not think that British public opinion, although it might change as the situation developed, would be willing to contemplate being involved in war on direct account of Czechoslovakia'.

If M. Léger prefers this version, I willingly revert to it, because by both versions I intended to convey (and I think they do convey) exactly the same thought.

M. Léger may have been disturbed by the fact that I did not, on September 9, qualify my observation by a statement such as I made on September 7 when I said 'While this was certainly true, I thought it was also probable that if France was obliged to act in discharge of her obligations, British public opinion would realise that we could not allow France to be in trouble, without wishing to do our best to help her'.

But of course that statement stands and my omission to repeat it cannot have cancelled it.

In fact, in speaking to the Press yesterday, the Prime Minister reaffirmed his statement of March 24 that His Majesty's Government contemplated the possibility that this country could not stand aside if a general conflict were to take place in which the security of France was menaced. He also described the efforts which His Majesty's Government had taken 'to dissipate any impression which the German Government might have that a brief and successful campaign against the Czechs could be safely embarked upon without danger of intervention first by France and later by Great Britain'.

It is no doubt difficult when one is having frequent conversations to state all the case on each occasion and isolated instances from a conversation, or a conversation itself which does not pretend to cover all the ground, are always liable to misunderstanding.

But I do not think there is any ground for misconception as to British position which I thought was well understood in Paris, and which has in no way altered.

Please clear this up as soon as possible with M. Léger or with M. Bonnet himself.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See No. 798.

<sup>4</sup> Sir E. Phipps replied on September 14 (by a telegram received on September 15) that, 'in order to clear up all possible misunderstanding', he had handed a copy of this telegram to M. Léger on September 13. M. Léger had thanked him, and had 'seemed to realise the situation'.

*Letter from Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

[C 9818/1941/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 12, 1938

My dear Phipps,

I got your private and confidential letter of September 10th<sup>1</sup> last night, in which you transmitted to me the question that Bonnet had put to you, not as Ambassador but as a friend. I naturally recognise of what importance it would be to the French Government to have a plain answer to such a question. But, as you pointed out to Bonnet—and I think, if I may say so, that your language was admirable—the question itself, though plain in form, cannot be dissociated from the circumstances in which it might be posed, which are necessarily at this stage completely hypothetical.

Moreover in this matter it is impossible for His Majesty's Government to have regard only to their own position, inasmuch as in any decision they may reach or action they may take they would, in fact, be committing the Dominions. Their Governments would quite certainly be unwilling to have their position in any way decided for them in advance of the actual circumstances of which they would desire themselves to judge.

So far, therefore, as I am in a position to give any answer at this stage to M. Bonnet's question, it would have to be that while His Majesty's Government would never allow the security of France to be threatened, they are unable to make precise statements of the character of their future action, or the time at which it would be taken, in circumstances that they cannot at present foresee.

Yours sincerely,

HALIFAX

<sup>1</sup> In this letter of September 10 Sir E. Phipps wrote that M. Bonnet had asked him, not as Ambassador, but as a friend, what answer His Majesty's Government would give to a question from the French Government, in the event of a German attack on Czechoslovakia: 'we are going to march, will you march with us?' Sir E. Phipps had said that, in his opinion, the question could not be answered in advance and without reference to the nature of the German aggression.

M. Bonnet asked that Sir E. Phipps should treat what he had said as 'very private; in fact he indicated that he did not wish his question to me to be officially recorded'. For this reason Sir E. Phipps transmitted it in a private letter.

Sir E. Phipps' impression of the conversation was that M. Bonnet was 'desperately anxious for a possible way out of this "impasse" without being *obliged* to fight'.

Sir E. Phipps wrote to Lord Halifax on September 14 that M. Bonnet 'seemed genuinely pleased at the negative nature of your reply to his question'.

No. 844

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 13, 10.35 a.m.)

No. 555 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9618/4839/18]

PRAGUE, September 13, 1938

My telegram No. 553.<sup>1</sup>

Situation at Eger and Karlsbad has become ugly. Huge crowds assembled after Nuremberg speech last night and police have used fire [? arms]. The military have also been called out. Official sources say there are so far six dead and twenty seriously injured.

Major Sutton-Pratt telephoned from Eger this morning and is now proceeding to Karlsbad. Mr. Pares telephoned from Liberec to say all is quiet there.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram of September 12 reported that according to reports which the General Staff believed trustworthy, Herr Hitler's speech would be followed by demonstrations and violence in the frontier areas.

No. 845

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 13, 1.20 p.m.)*  
No. 554 Telegraphic [C 9657/4839/18]

PRAGUE, September 13, 1938, 11.21 a.m.

My telegram No. 537.<sup>1</sup>

Following from Lord Runciman.

Dr. Hodza said to me last night, September 12, that in view of incidents of September 11 and September 12 he was preparing to issue special regulations to maintain public order e.g. forbidding of public meetings, early closing of restaurants, etc.

He will however try to arrange at today's meeting with the Sudeten delegation for a joint announcement to be issued in favour of refraining from all provocation.

In case of unfavourable reactions from Herr Hitler's speech, he said that special military measures might have to be taken as he was determined to maintain control.

He said definitely that this would not imply mobilisation as this step would mean war with Germany.

I warned Dr. Hodza of the danger of police interference with public meetings. He appeared to agree.

I am doing all I can to persuade Sudeten leaders to cooperate in non-provocation proposal.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram of September 9 reported prospects of a satisfactory settlement of the Mährisch-Ostrau affair (see No. 801, note 1) and of a resumption of negotiations.

No. 846

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 13, 11.47 a.m.)

No. 557 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9651/4839/18]

PRAGUE, September 13, 1938

My telegram No. 555.<sup>1</sup>

Present position is that martial law is being proclaimed in two or three of the affected districts including, I understand, Eger and Falkenau. Sudeten delegation which was to have met Lord Runciman at 2 p.m. has left for Eger to investigate the situation and to discuss with Henlein as soon as he returns from Germany, probably this evening.

Mr. Henderson has left for Karlsbad and Eger to get in touch if possible with Major Sutton-Pratt and also of course with Czech and Sudeten authorities, and to act as observer on behalf of Lord Runciman's mission.

Kundt spoke personally to Ashton-Gwatkin just before he left and promised to do his utmost to preserve order but situation may be out of the hands of Sudeten leaders. I understand that attempts were made to seize Government offices at Eger and Falkenau but this has to be confirmed.

Repeated to Berlin, Paris, Rome, Warsaw, Budapest, Bucharest and Belgrade.

<sup>1</sup> No. 844.

No. 847

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax* (Received September 13, 1.0 p.m.)

No. 241 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9654/1941/18]

PARIS, September 13, 1938

I am seeing M. Bonnet this afternoon after Ministerial Council, also M. Léger. The latter asked me by telephone this morning whether I had received any indication of your views on his suggestion regarding possible advisability of a Four Power Conference (see my telegram 237).<sup>1</sup>

It strikes me as significant in that connexion that M. Emile Roche in to-day's 'République' hints at this being the best way out of the present impasse. He is in close touch with M. Caillaux.

Public opinion here is, in my opinion, becoming more and more ready, in order to avoid war, to accept even the solution of a plebiscite for autonomy outside the Reich.

<sup>1</sup> No. 833.

No. 848

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax* (Received September 13, 1.25 p.m.)

No. 242 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9655/1941/18]

PARIS, September 13, 1938

M. Bonnet has just telephoned to beg that in view of the grave incidents in Czechoslovakia resulting in several deaths and proclamation in certain



districts of state of siege, it is most urgent for Lord Runciman to issue without delay a declaration stating that he is about to propose a plan calculated to bridge over differences between the two parties.

M. Bonnet feels that the whole question of peace or war may now be only a matter of minutes instead of days.

Repeated to Berlin and Prague.

#### No. 849

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 13, 2.0 p.m.)*

*No. 441 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9663/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 13, 1938

From internal point of view Herr Hitler in spite of certain violence and ill mannerisms made a good debating speech which showed no signs of mania with which he is credited in some quarters. He emphasised his sacrifices for and love of peace. War would only come in the last resort and in defence of German honour. If it came, the courage and resolution which brought the Nazis to power against apparently hopeless odds would carry Germany to victory.

As I forecast in paragraph 4 of my telegram No. 439<sup>1</sup> the speech has settled nothing. We are back where we were in May but with one difference. There is no longer any time for investigation or discussions; only *immediate* action by Czechoslovak Government can avert recourse to force by Germany. The Minister for Foreign Affairs in Nuremberg told me that German Government would never believe in the honesty of M. Benes until something was *done*. Words carried no conviction any more.

Hitler has made it clear that failing immediate grant of autonomy to Sudetens he will march. He has weighed the danger of Anglo-French intervention and there is now no doubt that he will deliberately run this risk. From this position he cannot and will not now recede. It is merely a question of date which he may assign as most opportune.

Situation as I see it is that an ultimatum without a definite time limit and without mention of a plebiscite in words has been presented to the Czechs. If Czechoslovak Government cannot or will not give satisfaction war will ensue whatever the consequences.

I see from your telegram 356<sup>2</sup> that you told French Ambassador that you did not think British opinion and His Majesty's Government would be prepared to fight Germany on account of aggression on Czechoslovakia. I feel obliged to point out that in consequence of public warnings to Germany and of language which I was instructed to hold, and held in Berlin and Nuremberg, official circles and German nation have been led to believe that His Majesty's Government have declared that in the event of aggression on

<sup>1</sup> No. 839.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. This telegram repeated to Berlin telegram No. 264 to Paris. See above, No. 834, note 1.

Czechoslovakia France would carry out her treaty obligations and England would stand by France. If after all this Germany deliberately and maliciously attacks Czechoslovakia and His Majesty's Government do no more than express their disapproval we shall be regarded in Germany with universal contempt.

The opponents of the régime will hate us for our cowardice whilst the Nazi far from thanking us for our neutrality will be infuriated at our impotent reprobation. We shall have irretrievably forfeited German respect and lost any chance of moderating vaulting ambition of extremists. Of reaction on smaller countries or of encouragement to chauvinistic imperialism I do not speak. There are now three possibilities.

(1) Czechs *without any further delay* grant genuine and full autonomy in compliance with Germany's demands and start at once putting it into execution.

(2) Refusal of Czechs, their dilatoriness or an unforeseen incident causes or is pretext for German aggression and a general conflagration ensues.

(3) Act of aggression is committed and England or both England and France remain neutral with consequence indicated above.

None of these possibilities is attractive but there is no doubt that No. 1 represents the best interest of the world, ourselves and Czechs themselves.

I am afraid however that even at the eleventh hour with the doom knocking at the door Dr. Benes will continue to haggle and will be unable to bring himself to make comprehensive, generous and immediate concessions essential to peace unless severest pressure is brought to bear upon him by His Majesty's Government and the French Government.

If French Government will not agree I recommend that His Majesty's Government should act alone making it clear to both the Czechoslovak Government and the French Government that if the Czechs will not accept Lord Runciman's last word we decline to be responsible for the consequences.

There is no ground for panic but at the same time the fact must be faced that there is not a moment to lose. If justification is required for what will be described in some quarters as shameful surrender to German threats it can surely be found in our consistent adherence to the principle of self-determination. Our principles are eternal even if the Nazi régime and political alliances and groupings are not. This principle we fought for in the war and in accordance with it we have ourselves taken grave risks all over the world.

We are invoking it today in Northern Ireland.

Repeated to Paris, Prague, Warsaw and Rome.

No. 850

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 283 Telegraphic [C 9655/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 13, 1938, 4.40 p.m.*

Following for Lord Runciman:—

Paris telegram No. 242.<sup>1</sup>

It seems to me that production of a plan by you in present circumstances would amount to intimation that in your opinion all prospect of further negotiation on present lines is exhausted.

Moreover I should have some doubt about production at present moment of a plan that might not afford a solution and would almost inevitably be labelled as a British plan, and might perhaps prejudice other possibilities.

But I should be very glad to learn your views as soon as possible.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 848.

No. 851

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 13, 6.15 p.m.)*

*No. 558 Telegraphic [C 9676/4839/18]*

PRAGUE, *September 13, 1938, 4.45 p.m.*

My telegram No. 557.<sup>1</sup>

Military Attaché was this morning informed as follows by the General Staff.

Herr Hitler's speech does not at present affect military situation in its wider sense *vis-à-vis* Germany. Its tone and manner of delivery were however threatening and inflammatory and a large number of incidents in Sudeten country are its immediate local reaction. Every effort will be made to restrict the use of force to minimum required for the preservation of order but present position of Czech officials in areas affected is extremely difficult. It is not anticipated that any special military measures will be decided upon at Council of Ministers now sitting except for imposition of martial law where necessary. General impression is that in spite of her great strength Germany is not ready to march at present but information has been received from a source considered to be absolutely reliable that preparations have been made to call up twelve classes of German reservists between October 8 and October 16 when military situation will become critical.

Please inform the War Office.

Repeated to Berlin, Paris, Warsaw, Bucharest, Belgrade, Rome, Budapest.

<sup>1</sup> No. 846.

No. 852

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 13, 6.15 p.m.)*  
*No. 243 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9703/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 13, 1938

My telegram No. 242.<sup>1</sup>

Minister for Foreign Affairs suggests, in order to gain time, Lord Runciman should now bring the two parties together in his presence and assist at their future negotiations.

M. Bonnet told me in confidence, if Lord Runciman adopted Karlsbad programme, French Government would, in order to maintain peace, be ready to assist it and press it upon the Czechs. His Excellency seems completely to have lost his nerve and to be ready for any solution to avoid war.

Repeated to Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 848.

No. 853

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 13, 6.15 p.m.)*  
*No. 443 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9697/65/18]*

BERLIN, September 13, 1938

Military Attaché attended Army Day at Nuremberg yesterday.

He formed the following opinion of views of the various Attachés and German officers prior to Herr Hitler's speech of yesterday evening.

French Military Attaché. Very apprehensive and took very grave view of the situation. French Military Attaché is leaving his Assistant in Berlin during this week's manœuvres in East Prussia which he is attending.

Czech Military Attaché. Thinks Herr Hitler is bluffing and not markedly apprehensive regarding the immediate future.

Italian Military Attaché. Optimistic but believes Germans have initiated a concentration of troops for use if negotiations break down, near Czech frontier in Austria and Saxony. Clearly knew nothing of reported movements of troops to Brenner sector.

Swiss and Belgian Military Attachés. Optimistic as to present moment but very apprehensive for the future.

American Military Attaché. Very optimistic as regards this autumn but does not exclude the possibility of trouble if disturbances arise in Sudetenland.

Polish and Hungarian Military Attachés. Refused to be drawn.

Officers of German War Office staff including General Tippleskirch were clearly unwilling to discuss present situation. They added nothing to information given on Sunday by the head of Attachés Gruppe (see my telegrams No. 432<sup>1</sup> and 437<sup>2</sup>). All however seemed much less worried than they were and general atmosphere gave the Military Attachés impression of [*sic*] Herr

<sup>1</sup> No. 831.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. See No. 831, note 5.

Hitler's decision even if a hypothetical one was already known to German War Office and that officers had therefore ceased to concern themselves with stressing possible dangers but had resumed a normal attitude either genuine or as camouflage.

Please inform War Office.

**No. 854**

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 13, 6.25 p.m.)

*No. 444 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9698/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 13, 1938

Prague telegram 555.<sup>1</sup>

None of Ministry of Foreign Affairs have yet returned to Berlin from Nuremberg but I hope to be able to see Minister for Foreign Affairs or State Secretary as soon as one or the other is back tomorrow.

It will be useless however to urge patience and moderation, as I have done for the past four months unless something definite is at once announced at Prague. In a very short time Hitler may well not even accept a plebiscite. Is not full acceptance of Karlsbad points better than that with some reservation to the effect that profession of Nazi philosophy must be kept within limits of State constitution?

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 844.

**No. 855**

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 13, 7.10 p.m.)*

*No. 244 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9704/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 13, 1938

1. I saw Minister for Foreign Affairs this afternoon after Ministerial Council.
2. M. Bonnet was very upset and said that peace must be preserved at any price as neither France nor Great Britain were ready for war. Colonel Lindbergh had returned from his tour horrified at overwhelming strength of Germany in the air and terrible weakness of all other Powers. He declares Germany has 8,000 military aeroplanes and can turn out 1,500 a month. M. Bonnet said that French and British towns would be wiped out and little or no retaliation would be possible.
3. He said there had been rumours that today's Council had decided upon mobilization; this was quite untrue. On the contrary, no further military measures were contemplated, and peace must be maintained at any price.
4. M. Bonnet was glad to receive from me yesterday a copy of your telegram No. 141<sup>1</sup> of May 22 with our warning about not being automatically obliged to take arms if France resisted German aggression. He indicated

<sup>1</sup> No. 271 in Volume I of this Series.

most confidentially that he had found this useful with certain bellicose French ministers. He hoped warning still applied. I said it most certainly did, although it had not been renewed, but merely communicated in writing at his own request.

5. M. Bonnet now seems to fear and deplore what he describes as bellicose attitude of certain organs of British press, which may unduly encourage the French press to be intransigent. He even seemed to fear that the British official 'exposé' given to press on evening of September 11<sup>2</sup> was calculated to raise French hopes unduly.

6. M. Bonnet's collapse seems to me so sudden and so extraordinary that I am asking for an interview with M. Daladier.

<sup>2</sup> See No. 837, note 1.

### No. 856

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 13, 7.30 p.m.)*  
*No. 245 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9707/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 13, 1938

My telegrams Nos. 237<sup>1</sup> and 241.<sup>2</sup>

M. Bonnet repeated this proposal to me this afternoon. He made it clear that it did not in any way imply that Lord Runciman's efforts at Prague should cease. On the contrary a Conference of the Four Powers might be summoned either by His Majesty's Government or by French Government, with a view to averting danger of war due to terribly strained position in Czechoslovakia. The Conference would first of all deal with that question and it might be indicated that afterwards its scope would be enlarged to negotiate a general settlement, once Czechoslovakia were out of the way.

His Excellency would be glad of your views on this suggestion.

Repeated to Berlin and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 833.

<sup>2</sup> No. 847.

### No. 857

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 13, 8.30 p.m.)*  
*No. 246 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9708/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 13, 1938

My telegram No. 244.<sup>1</sup>

I have seen M. Daladier.

I was careful not to give away M. Bonnet, for, if they are of different opinions, this might have led to a Cabinet crisis with deplorable results.

I said in this grave situation I wanted to get M. Daladier's impressions first hand.

The President of Council said that he was gravely perturbed by bloodshed in Czechoslovakia and felt every minute was now precious. Hitler's speech

<sup>1</sup> No. 855.

had not closed any (? door),<sup>2</sup> but subsequent events were most alarming, and called for urgent action to prevent a conflagration. He urged speedy action by Lord Runciman.

I finally asked M. Daladier point blank whether he adhered to policy expounded to me by him on September 8.<sup>3</sup> He replied, but with evident lack of enthusiasm, that if Germans used force French would be obliged also. He added, however, that of course he would have to be sure (? in regard to)<sup>2</sup> rights and wrongs of recent bloodshed in Czechoslovakia.

M. Daladier said he had sent two officers to Prague by air in last . . .<sup>2</sup> days in order to impress upon M. Benes how essential it was to move quickly and to make every possible concession to Sudeten . . .<sup>2</sup> he spoke bitterly of M. Benes, as did M. Bonnet previously.

Having heard of Lindbergh<sup>4</sup> report from another source, I quoted that, but M. Daladier said that seemed unduly pessimistic for he had reason to believe the Russian(? s had)<sup>2</sup> 5,000 aeroplanes.

To resume, M. Daladier of today was quite a different one to the M. Daladier of September 8, and tone and language were very different indeed.

I fear French have been bluffing, although I have continually pointed out to them that one cannot bluff Hitler. Rather than give in to it, which would mean actual suicide, he would in last resort prefer war.

M. Daladier said he would perhaps telephone to the Prime Minister.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>3</sup> See No. 807.

<sup>4</sup> See No. 855.

### No. 858

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 13, 8.30 p.m.)*  
*No. 247 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9709/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 13, 1938

My telegram No. 245.<sup>1</sup>

M. Daladier seemed to prefer a *Three Power Conference* of Germany, France and Great Britain over Czechoslovakia, if Herr Hitler would agree, but I pointed out that this seemed to me most unlikely.

Repeated to Berlin and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 856.

### No. 859

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 13, 11.30 p.m.)*  
*No. 564 Telegraphic [C 9722/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 13, 1938, 9.0 p.m.

Paris telegram No. 242.<sup>1</sup>

Following from Lord Runciman.

Publication of our plan would be of no use in present circumstances. Immediate problem is one of law and order.

<sup>1</sup> No. 848.

If and when time returns for considering plan and draft we could produce one of our own. But at the moment we cannot be certain that any plan however favourable would now be accepted by Sudeten Party.

The various members of the mission have been busy trying to do what they can to remedy situation.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

### No. 860

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 14, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 566 Telegraphic [C 9715/4839/18]*

PRAGUE, September 13, 1938, 10.0 p.m.

7 p.m.—Dr. Hodza has been in telephonic communication regarding present situation in Sudeten areas with deputy Frank who is with Henlein and other Sudeten leaders in Asch.

Frank has given an assurance to Dr. Hodza that peace and order will be immediately restored if:

- (a) the Czech police are withdrawn from Sudeten areas, and
- (b) soldiers are strictly confined to their normal military (? duties)<sup>1</sup>, and
- (c) martial law is cancelled.

Dr. Hodza has sent a reply to Frank through Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin to the effect that he is ready to agree to these demands on condition that Sudeten party leaders will come to Prague as soon as possible to discuss with him maintenance of public order.

Frank had replied that he must first consult Henlein and will reply direct to Dr. Hodza.

Meanwhile Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin and Mr. Peto are proceeding to Asch if possible to see Henlein.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.

### No. 861

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 13, 10.10 p.m.)*  
*No. 248 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9710/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 13, 1938

My telegram No. 246.<sup>1</sup>

Following is a very urgent message that M. Daladier has dictated to me and begged me to send immediately to the Prime Minister:—

‘Things are moving very rapidly and in such a grave manner that they risk getting quite out of control almost at once, and neutralising all the reasonable measures undertaken by France and Great Britain, such as the

<sup>1</sup> No. 857.



Runciman Mission, pressure on M. Benes, etc., which I am keeping up more than ever.

'Entry of German troops into Czechoslovakia must at all costs be prevented. If not France will be faced with her obligation, viz: automatic necessity to fulfil her engagement.

'To avoid this I propose two things:—

'1. Lord Runciman to make known his plan publicly and immediately.

'2. Can he also bring the two parties together in his presence?

'Should above procedure not be sufficient I propose

'3. An immediate proposal to Hitler for a meeting of the Three Powers, viz: Germany for Sudetens, France for the Czechs, and Great Britain for Lord Runciman, with a view to obtaining that pacific settlement advocated by Hitler in his speech last night. After that settlement a more general settlement with other additional Powers participating might be contemplated.

'Do you agree to my above proposals, or would you suggest any others?'

Message ends.

#### No. 862

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*  
*No. 368 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9708/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 13, 1938*<sup>1</sup>

You should ensure through Ribbentrop the delivery at the earliest possible moment of the following message to Herr Hitler as personal message to him from Prime Minister:—

'In view of increasingly critical situation I propose to come over at once to see you with a view to trying to find peaceful solution. I propose to come across by air and am ready to start tomorrow.

'Please indicate earliest time at which you can see me and suggest place of meeting. Should be grateful for very early reply.

NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN.<sup>2</sup>

For your information. Our intention is to make no public reference to the above until the Chancellor has had opportunity of sending reply which we hope we may have at earliest possible moment.<sup>2</sup>

Repeated to Prague.

<sup>1</sup> There is no indication on the draft or on the out-file copy of this telegram of the time at which it was approved or despatched. The draft, which is initialled by Sir A. Cadogan, is dated September 13. It would appear that the telegram was despatched shortly before the telegram to Sir E. Phipps printed below as No. 866.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Chamberlain had considered the possibility of a visit by himself to Herr Hitler as early as August 30. He had discussed the plan with one or two of his colleagues, and had mentioned it to Sir N. Henderson during the latter's visit to London. Sir N. Henderson thought that, if Herr Hitler had decided to invade Czechoslovakia, he might cancel his decision on hearing of Mr. Chamberlain's plan. Until the afternoon of September 13 Mr. Chamberlain had in mind that his plan might be put into effect on or about September 17.

## CHAPTER IX

Mr. Chamberlain's meeting with Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden: Anglo-French conversations of September 18: Anglo-French approach to Czechoslovak Government: acceptance by Czechoslovak Government of Anglo-French proposals.  
(September 13-21, 1938.)

No. 863

*Sir N. Charles (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 14, 9.30 a.m.)  
No. 571 Telegram [C 9822/1941/18]*

ROME, September 13, 1938, 11.0 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

'In responsible Rome circles the Führer's speech is regarded as a powerful contribution to clarification of Sudeten problem. In the first place fact should be recalled that Czechoslovakia is an authentic and paradoxical creation of 'diplomacy of Versailles' which after having demolished the old Austria felt the need of creating a new one with Prague as the capital. The new State thus included 7,000,000 Czechs together with 3,500,000 Germans, 1,000,000 Magyars, 2,500,000 Slovaks, a strong number of Poles and Ruthenes without reckoning other minority races like Jews. A real mosaic as the Empire of the Habsburgs used to be labelled. These minorities taken together which have recently set up a united front exceed in number the mass of the Czechs. It is no question of marginal minorities in the face of great united majority but numerical impossibility of minorities with strong national consciousness within a State which has barely (? existed)<sup>2</sup> twenty years.

'In these conditions M. Benes would have been wisely advised if he had accepted fully and at once the famous Karlsbad points. He did not do so because he too like the former Austria of which he is the principal heir is always behind by an idea or an hour.

'In this moment after Herr Hitler's speech question is shifted to concrete plane of right to self-determination which cannot be denied by those who

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram of September 13 summarized the chief points in a bulletin in the 'Informazione Diplomatica' outlining the official Italian attitude towards Herr Hitler's speech, of which the telegram printed above gives the full text.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

proclaim themselves champions of such right. There are now only two possible solutions: the first lies in granting Sudeten Germans the right to dispose of their own destiny and the second lies in denying this right. By giving Sudetens possibility of separating themselves from Prague the way of justice and above all that of peace is chosen, the other solution is that of disorder and war.

'Lord Runciman must now direct his task to convincing M. Benes that wisdom and opportuneness consist in accepting separation of a limb which is completely extraneous to the life of its own organism. Either this or chronic agitation of a co-existence which has become impossible with war as the ultimate outcome. But what can Czechoslovakia hope from a war? and should millions of young men from every European nation plunge themselves into strife with sole object of preservation of the predominance of Prague over German Sudeten population? These questions contain reply in themselves.

'In responsible Rome circles it is held that it may be in the interest of Bolsheviks of the East and West to provoke conflagration. But this is not the interest of Europe or the world.'

#### No. 864

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 14, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 567 Telegraphic [C 9723/4839/18]*

PRAGUE, September 13, 1938, 11.40 p.m.

According to official information received up to six o'clock there have been eleven deaths in the course of recent demonstrations. Five are of German[s], five of Czech[s], four of whom were gendarmes and one was a Slovak whose death took place before Herr Hitler's speech and may be unconnected with Sudeten question. It is said at Ministry of Foreign Affairs to be impossible that thirty deaths could have occurred as Herr Frank is understood to have alleged.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed me that the police had had orders not to shoot and had been able either to ward off attacks on public buildings or to regain possession of them without firing which was in Dr. Krofta's opinion a great tribute to their self-restraint and efficiency . . .<sup>1</sup> appeared that such attempts and demonstrations were likely to continue now that martial law had been proclaimed. Dr. Krofta explained to me that this was not strictly speaking a military measure but provided facilities for summary administration of justice and severe penalties. Such an emergency measure was in accordance with previous Austrian practice.

In addition, all meetings of whatever nature throughout the State had been forbidden and prohibition . . .<sup>1</sup> was also . . .<sup>1</sup>

Repeated to Berlin, Paris, Warsaw, Rome, Budapest, Bucharest and Belgrade.

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.

*Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)**No. 416 [C 9661/5302/18]*FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 13, 1938*

Sir,

During the course of a conversation with the Polish Ambassador to-day, I asked his Excellency whether he had any information to give me as to the light in which M. Beck was regarding the present situation, which was causing us so much anxiety. The Ambassador said that he had no direct instructions on which to base an answer, since M. Beck had been looking forward to discussions with myself at Geneva. He was, however, in possession of a telegram that M. Beck had sent to the Polish Ambassador in Paris, of which he told me the gist was as follows: M. Beck regarded the position as very serious and felt convinced that the German Government would insist upon some drastic settlement to meet the Sudetendeutsch grievances. At the same time, he did not think that the German Government wanted a major war. The Ambassador proceeded to ask me whether I could tell him anything further in regard to the British attitude.

2. I told his Excellency that I was very glad indeed to have the opportunity of doing so, and I should be grateful if he would report what I said to M. Beck. We had been very anxious that our attitude should be in no way misunderstood. We had made no threats to the German Government, and we had made it plain throughout that we were fully alive to the necessity of finding a solution of a real problem. At the same time, we had made it quite plain that, in our view, if in consequence of any resort by Germany to violence against Czechoslovakia war should ensue with France, it would be almost certainly impossible for this country to keep out of it. Our position had not varied and, while it was quite impossible for me to pronounce at this moment that this country would or would not intervene at any particular moment, I was certain that, in the circumstances we were contemplating, the sequence of events might, and quite possibly would, very quickly make it impossible for us not to be drawn in. If all this happened no one could say that the same thing might not even happen to the United States. No one who knew British feeling could mistake its current. Ordinary people might not be well informed about the details of the Sudetendeutsch problem; they would no doubt all feel that if the Sudeten had grievances they ought to be met, but what they were more and more coming to feel was that it was quite intolerable that the whole world should be upset and kept in suspense by Herr Hitler, and the transition from this feeling to one of real anger leading to very vital decisions was not a long one. In the present circumstances where it was plain that negotiations had succeeded in so far bridging the gulf as greatly to reduce the difference between both sides, it was more and more being recognised how unjustifiable would be any violent action that made the way of negotiation impossible.

3. I then asked the Ambassador whether he thought that it was possible for M. Beck to use any moderating influence at Berlin. To this he replied that he did not think his Government could do much in this sense. They had their own difficulties with Germany and, were they to attempt to use influence in the sense I had indicated, he anticipated that they might be told to mind their own business.

4. I enquired whether his Excellency could give me any indication of the attitude of his country in the event of war breaking out. To this he said that it was impossible to give a precise answer. Czechoslovakia was in some respects what he called a bad case. The Poles disliked the Czechs; the position of the question of Teschen had been, and was, a constant irritant; and the Poles profoundly disliked the Czechoslovak connexion with Russia. Feeling themselves placed between two potential enemies, they could never feel as comfortable as they would wish on their Czechoslovak frontier, so long as the connexion between Czechoslovakia and Russia was as close as it was to-day. The Ambassador's own impression was that his country would desire, if they could, to keep out of it. He himself thought, however, that they would probably end by being drawn in, and he knew, as had been the sense of a message that he had conveyed to the Prime Minister not long ago, that it was one of the fixed points of M. Beck's policy, in pursuance of the Pilsudski tradition, to wish to orientate the policy of Poland as closely as possible with that of London. I told the Ambassador that we were naturally glad to know this and that we, on our side, were not less sensible of the great importance of maintaining the closest possible relations between our two countries and the closest measure of harmony in their respective policies.

I am, &c.,

HALIFAX

No. 866

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

*No. 271 Telegraphic [C 9708/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 14, 1938, 12.40 a.m.

Your telegram No. 246.<sup>1</sup>

Please deliver following message to M. Daladier.

Begins.

Prime Minister fully recognizes immediate urgency of action in view of pace at which events are moving. He has considered the two courses of action proposed by you, and thinks with you that either or both may be found useful. But before deciding on your proposals, Prime Minister is exploring tonight another possibility of direct action in Berlin on which he should hope to be in a position to inform you fully tomorrow. We have some hope that it might be helpful on wider lines you suggest.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No. 857. The reference may be a mistake for telegram No. 248 (No. 861).

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 14, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 568 Telegraphic [C 9754/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 14, 1938, 1.15 a.m.

My telegram No. 565.<sup>1</sup>

Minister for Foreign Affairs has given me the following explanation of latest developments.

He said that tone used by Herr Hitler in addressing remarks to a foreign State was unheard of but speech (? contained)<sup>2</sup> no impossible demands and had seemed to approve of continuance of negotiations so to that extent it had been reassuring.

Unluckily its effect had been most unfortunate in the eight districts where martial law had been proclaimed which were all in a limited area namely between Karlsbad-Aussig. Dr. Krofta then confirmed what President of the Council had already told me in regard to the attempt made to seize public buildings and seemed very nervous as to what the real [*sic*] perhaps locally highly organised but more systematic action might. . . .<sup>2</sup> He observed that not long ago attempt had been made to introduce arms from the Reich and military authorities were very anxious lest attempts were in progress to prepare the way for an invasion. If their fears were confirmed the Government would find it necessary although with the greatest reluctance to take measures similar to those of May 21. I showed my alarm at this and reminded Dr. Krofta that Herr Hitler had announced in his speech that he would not tolerate a repetition of that challenge. Minister for Foreign Affairs who appeared to make note of this assured me that no such action would be taken unless considered to be absolutely necessary. He feared however that intention to prepare an attack from Germany might exist and said that M. Benes was now also anxious and pessimistic.

I emphasized to Dr. Krofta that if on the other hand no such intention did yet exist, Government ought to be most careful of the measures they were taking not to turn what might be a transient fit of emotion into a revolutionary movement. Making it clear that I was speaking unofficially I told Dr. Krofta as I had already told Dr. Hodza something of the impressions which Major Sutton-Pratt had formed at Eger—see my telegram No. 559.<sup>3</sup> I emphasized

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. In this telegram despatched at midnight September 13-14 Mr. Newton reported that, according to a statement from Dr. Hodza there was 'still no question of mobilisation' and that 'it was not quite correct to say that martial law in the ordinary sense had been instituted. Trials would take place before civil courts, but procedure would be summary. The measure taken was serious but so was the need.'

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>3</sup> Not printed. In this telegram of September 13 Major Sutton-Pratt reported: 'I spent last night at Eger. Thousands marched in streets in frenzied spontaneous joy after Hitler's speech. Crowd was orderly but scores of Jewish shop windows were broken. This morning the police alleged they were fired on from a window and shot back into the crowd, killing one man. Military assistance was requested. Five tanks and two armoured cars entered the town, firing wildly a large proportion of blanks. I endeavoured to speak to the captain, who

how important it was that officers or police in charge of such delicate and difficult tasks should be as cool-headed and unprovocative as possible.

Repeated to Paris, Berlin, Warsaw, Rome, Budapest, Bucharest and Belgrade.

fired at me, so I approached later under police protection and remonstrated with him regarding the indiscriminate firing. He insisted that it was his duty to clear the streets, and proceeded through the town still firing. I consider the tank personnel quite lost their heads. Hakenkreuz flags were flying in numbers in S.D.P. area.'

#### No. 868

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 14, 9.30 a.m.)  
No. 570 Telegraphic [C 9734/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 14, 1938, 1.15 a.m.<sup>1</sup>

Following information has been received in strict confidence by my Air Attaché. In the course of conversation General Faihr (C.A.S.) stated that shortly after midday today all Air Force squadrons had left their peace-time stations and were now located each on a separate landing ground. This in effect means that Air Force is at its war stations and movements appear to correspond to those described in his report of the 5th/8th to the Air Ministry. General Faihr further informed him all squadrons had sufficient supplies of bombs, petrol, ammunition etc. for three days of active service. He also (? said that)<sup>2</sup> although no special class of reservists had been called up all those who were due (? for release during)<sup>2</sup> next few days were being retained in service.

Owing to the present state of tension existing between Czechoslovakia and Germany I strongly suggest this information should be considered as most secret and given the smallest necessary circulation. Please inform Air Ministry.

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was drafted on September 13.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

#### No. 869

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 14, 2.15 a.m.)  
No. 571 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9695/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 14, 1938

Prime Minister's Office have just communicated following message received at 12.15 a.m. from Herr Henlein's aide-de-camp at Eger. Begins.

Henlein has today examined situation with negotiating delegation. In view of events of last forty-eight hours, conditions for a continuation of negotiations in spirit of instructions hitherto given to negotiators no longer exist. Herr Henlein has therefore released delegation from their task and has thanked them for their self-sacrificing labours. Ends.

This is regarded as answer to Dr. Hodza's suggestion that Sudeten Party leaders should discuss matter in Prague (see my telegram No. 566).<sup>1</sup>

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 860.

### No. 870

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 14, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 569 Telegraphic [C 9716/4839/18]*

PRAGUE, September 14, 1938, 2.40 a.m.<sup>1</sup>

My telegram No. 566.<sup>2</sup>

[? The] three Sudeten demands were accompanied by a request that an answer should be received within six hours, i.e. by midnight failing which Sudeten party would not hold themselves responsible for the consequences. I understand Dr. Hodza's reply is now being considered by Sudeten leaders at Asch.

My French colleague informs me, on instructions of his Government, he has strongly urged Dr. Hodza to accept Sudeten demands unconditionally. Dr. Hodza is now consulting Dr. Benes about this.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was drafted on September 13.

<sup>2</sup> No. 860.

### No. 871

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 14, 11.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 572 Telegraphic [? by telephone] [C 9717/4839/18]*

PRAGUE, September 14, 1938

My telegram No. 571.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Gwatkin telephoned at 9 a.m. to say that he had seen Frank during the night and hoped to see Herr Henlein this morning, but, in any case, he intended to return to Prague after lunch to-day unless he had other instructions.

The four points had been communicated to him as follows:—

1. The withdrawal of military law.
2. The withdrawal of all Staatspolizei from districts with a German majority.
3. The gendarmerie and the local police force to be restricted to normal functions.
4. The military to be restricted to purely military posts and tasks.

Herr Frank has demanded that the four points should be not only accepted but also carried out before any representative of the S.D.P. would come to Prague for discussions with the Government. Herr Frank thought that, if this demand were accepted and put into force, the S.D.P. organisation would

<sup>1</sup> No. 869.



at once publish an appeal for peace and the S.D.P. would be prepared to recommend negotiations for a settlement, but not on the basis considered so far. Herr Frank believed that the word 'Volksbestimmungsrecht' in the Nuremberg speech meant more than the existing basis would give.

Mr. Gwatkin emphasised that the information above was only what Frank had said to him, but that he hoped to have further information from Henlein if he saw him this morning.

#### No. 872

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 14, 12.0 noon)

No. 249 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9724/1941/18]

PARIS, September 14, 1938

There is little doubt that French public opinion would, in order to avoid war, hail with relief grant of autonomy to Sudeten Germans outside the Reich if imposed on M. Benes by His Majesty's Government and French Government.

'Le Matin' has strong leader in favour of plebiscite but general opinion prefers autonomy as more likely to bring prompt appeasement.

#### No. 873

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 15, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 448 Telegraphic [C 9802/1941/18]

BERLIN, September 14, 1938, 1.50 p.m.<sup>1</sup>

Berchtesgaden.

I got into telephonic communication with Field-Marshal Göring at 2.30 p.m. this afternoon and told him of the Prime Minister's proposal. I reminded him that he had several times suggested to me a meeting of the Prime Minister with Herr Hitler. Did he still consider it a good suggestion? His reply was 'Naturally'. I said message had been given to Herr von Ribbentrop at 9.30 a.m. and as I was still without an answer I asked him speaking as a personal friend to get into touch with Berchtesgaden with a view to expediting a reply. He said that he would do so at once. He was obviously relieved and enthusiastic.

He rang me up myself later to tell me of the Chancellor's reply. He overflowed good wishes. Unfortunately he is unwell so will in any case not be down at Berchtesgaden himself. I thought it as well to observe that he must

<sup>1</sup> From the context of this telegram, and the long interval between the hours of despatch and receipt, it would appear that the telegram was drafted and despatched later than 1.50 p.m. Telegram No. 449 from Sir N. Henderson was despatched at 12.10 a.m. on September 15. It is therefore possible that on this telegram No. 448 the hour of despatch should read '11.50 p.m.' and not '1.50 p.m.'.

not expect too much all at once. While he inveighed as usual against the Czechs he was far from bellicose and asked why British public could not have confidence in the pacifism of Herr Hitler.

No. 874

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 14, 2.20 p.m.)*  
*No. 250 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9740/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 14, 1938

Minister for Foreign Affairs tells me that France would accept any solution of Czechoslovak question to avoid war. He said to me 'we cannot sacrifice ten million men in order to prevent three and a half million Sudetens joining the Reich'.

M. Bonnet said that the French Government would prefer a Federal and neutralized Czechoslovakia with autonomous Sudeten inside it, but in the last resort, and to avoid German aggression, they would consent to a plebiscite on general question whether Sudetens shall remain inside or shall be allowed to join the Reich.

M. Bonnet said that a new factor in the situation was M. Litvinov's attitude at Geneva on September 11. He had indicated that Soviet Government would, in the event of German aggression on Czechoslovakia, consult the Council of the League and would not act directly in defence of that state. In these circumstances France could not fight, alone in the first instance, on three fronts, viz. Germany, Italy and Spain.

M. Bonnet expressed great indignation with Czechs who, it seems, mean to mobilize without consulting the French, just as they declared a state of siege without consulting them. He has therefore given a broad hint to M. Benes that France may have to reconsider her obligations towards Czechoslovakia.

M. Bonnet remarked to me 'we are not ready for war and we must therefore make most far-reaching concessions to the Sudetens and to Germany, adding that this must be done in spite of Czechs and Soviets quickly, in order to forestall any aggression by Germany'.

Despite Lord Runciman's disinclination to produce a plan now, M. Bonnet persists in thinking that it would have a most useful effect.

Repeated to Prague and Berlin.

No. 875

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*  
*No. 272 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9708/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 14, 1938, 4.10 p.m.

Last night situation appeared to me to be developing so fast that Prime Minister felt impelled to set in motion a plan which he had had in mind and which we have been considering for some time.

It was that he should offer to go at once to Germany to meet Herr Hitler in a last effort to find a peaceful solution.

We have, moreover, during past weeks, had several suggestions from various quarters in Germany that a direct communication from the Prime Minister to Herr Hitler—still better a personal interview—might be the best means of reaching agreement.

We and the French Government have been in consultation as to how best to deter Herr Hitler from violent action, and we have generally been thinking along the lines of warning him of the consequences that such action might involve. It must, I think, be recognised that, after May 21, or rather in view of the way events of that date were exploited by the Press, it would be difficult for Herr Hitler to submit to another rebuff. If he still has any wish for a peaceful settlement, it might be made easier for him to drop his plans for possible action if Prime Minister were to go to meet him in Germany to try to find a solution with him. If he still has any wish for an Anglo-German understanding, leading to a general settlement, this procedure might make it easier for him to choose the way of negotiation rather than of force.

Moreover, we have had increasing evidence of growing discontent with the régime in Germany and with Herr Hitler's conduct of foreign policy. This plan which we now propose, or the bare proposal of it, might strengthen the moderates in Germany.

It was with all these considerations in mind that we finally came to the conclusion that the plan might have to be tried, and the events of yesterday forced us to the conclusion that there was no time to lose.

Last night a telegram was sent to His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin (text in my immediately following telegram),<sup>1</sup> who delivered the message this morning at 9 a.m. to Herr von Weizsäcker for immediate transmission by telephone through Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Führer. The latter's reply is given in a following telegram.<sup>2</sup>

Please immediately inform French Government, giving them, if you think it necessary, the arguments which I have set out above. You, and I hope they, will realise that they are not to be publicly emphasised—particularly of course the argument regarding encouragement of moderates in Germany.

Prime Minister has it in mind to try and see whether Hitler can yet be induced to collaborate in peaceful settlement of Sudeten question. If he finds him intractable he will repeat and emphasise the warnings that have already been given.

It is of course impossible to see how interview might develop, but Prime Minister hopes that French Government will trust him never to lose sight of the common aims and policies of the two Governments, French and British, who have worked so closely together during the crisis. He is resolved to maintain that cooperation.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. See No. 862.

<sup>2</sup> No. 876.

No. 876

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*  
*No. 277 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9708/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 14, 1938, 4.45 p.m.*

My telegram No. 272.<sup>1</sup>

Reply<sup>2</sup> has now been received from Herr Hitler who says he will be absolutely at disposal of Prime Minister and hopes meeting may be arranged for tomorrow about midday.

Prime Minister is leaving for Germany by air tomorrow morning.

<sup>1</sup> No. 875.

<sup>2</sup> It has not been possible to trace in the Foreign Office archives a copy of Herr Hitler's reply.

No. 877

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 285 Telegraphic [? by telephone] [C 9708/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 14, 1938, 5.10 p.m.*

Following is for your and Lord Runciman's information only.

My telegram No. 284.<sup>1</sup>

Reply has now been received from Herr Hitler who says he will be absolutely at the disposal of the Prime Minister and hopes meeting may be arranged for tomorrow about midday. Prime Minister is accordingly leaving for Germany by air tomorrow morning.

It is hoped to issue a communiqué this evening.

<sup>1</sup> No. 862.

No. 878

*Note of telephone message from Sir N. Henderson to the Foreign Office<sup>1</sup>*  
*[C 10107/1941/18]*

*September 14, 1938*

Sir Nevile Henderson rang me up at 10.20 this morning. He had interviewed Herr von Weizsäcker at 9 o'clock and had handed to him the Prime Minister's message. Herr von Weizsäcker promised to telegraph straight to Herr von Ribbentrop with the request that the latter should convey the message immediately to Herr Hitler.

The Ambassador was not able to tell me much else on the telephone, but he added one or two points.

He said that he had accompanied the message with one or two comments of his own; he had observed that this showed the length to which His Majesty's Government were ready to go in their effort to avoid what might

<sup>1</sup> This note is unsigned.

otherwise be inevitable. He had also made Herr von Weizsäcker aware that it was not an entirely new idea. Herr von Weizsäcker seems to have asked at one point whether the plan was evolved before or after the Sudeten ultimatum. Sir Neville Henderson had made it clear that the plan had been in being long before that, and that in fact he knew that it was in contemplation when he last returned from London.

The Ambassador and Herr von Weizsäcker had a short discussion as to actual procedure. There were two alternatives:

(1) Direct journey to the place of meeting. In that event Sir Neville Henderson would try to arrive independently from Berlin in time for the meeting.

(2) Sir Neville Henderson would rather prefer that a night should be spent in Berlin and that the parties should proceed to the meeting on the following morning.

Sir Neville added that secrecy was absolutely vital. I told him that we were aware of this and had taken every precaution, but as he knew that would only be until we received the reply.

#### No. 879

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*  
*Nos. 274 and 275 Telegraphic [C 9561/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 14, 1938, 5.15 p.m.

Your telegram No. 238<sup>1</sup> and my telegram No. 240 Saving.<sup>2</sup>

1. It would appear from your telegram under reference that quotation from the French Ambassador's record given in the last paragraph is taken from his account of his conversation with me on September 9. The important sentence in this passage is the following: 'Dans le cas où la France se trouverait dans l'obligation de venir au secours de la Tchécoslovaquie on se trouverait devant une situation . . .<sup>3</sup> en raison de laquelle l'Angleterre serait sans doute amenée à participer au conflit dans un délai qui ne pourrait être évidemment fixé à l'avance.'

2. There is nothing in my record of my conversation with the French Ambassador on September 9 (my despatch No. 2051<sup>4</sup>) corresponding to the passage you quote. There is, however, in paragraph 3 of my record of my conversation with him on September 7 (my despatch No. 2032<sup>5</sup>) a passage covering the same ground as the sentence quoted above. This passage reads as follows:—'While this was certainly true, I thought it was also probable that if France was obliged to act in discharge of her obligations, British public opinion would realise that we could not allow France to be in trouble,

<sup>1</sup> No. 834.

<sup>3</sup> The text here should read 'nouvelle' (see No. 834).

<sup>4</sup> No. 814.

<sup>2</sup> No. 842.

<sup>5</sup> No. 798.

without wishing to do our best to help her. This distinction meant that, although Great Britain might feel obliged to support France in a conflict, if only because it would recognise that British interests were involved in any threat to French security, it did not mean that we should be willing automatically to find ourselves at war with Germany, because France might be involved in discharge of obligations which Great Britain did not share, and which a large section of British opinion had always disliked.'

3. In view of the discrepancy between these two records I must ask that my own account should be taken as representing the view of His Majesty's Government and I shall be glad if you will clear up the position with M. Bonnet.

**No. 880**

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 14, 7.30 p.m.)

*No. 582 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9755/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 14, 1938

In the course of a long communiqué issued today by the Sudeten German Party from Eger it is stated that Herr Henlein, having explained to the members of Lord Runciman's mission the reasons which had led him to break off the negotiations, added that 'a real and immediate realization of the Party's demands (viz: those referred to in my telegram No. 572<sup>1</sup>) might still make it possible to enter into negotiations with the Government. In that case however the eight Karlsbad points would in no way suffice, but account would have to be taken of the Sudeten German right to self-determination. Conrad Henlein thanked the representatives of Lord Runciman's mission for their work, the object of which had been to settle the relations of the nationalities, and finally placed the blame upon the Czechoslovak Government for the fact that their work must also remain without success.'

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 871.

**No. 881**

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*  
*No. 370 Telegraphic [C 9663/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 14, 1938, 8.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 441.<sup>1</sup>

1. The observations you make in the fifth paragraph of your telegram seem to reveal what may be a possible misunderstanding in your mind of the position of His Majesty's Government, which I feel bound to correct.

<sup>1</sup> No. 849.

2. The statement you quote from paragraph 8 of my telegram to Paris No. 264<sup>2</sup> in which I said I had told the French Ambassador that I did not think that British opinion or His Majesty's Government would be prepared to enter upon hostilities with Germany on account of aggression by Germany on Czechoslovakia, is a perfectly true statement, but it does not cover the whole position and should not be read out of its context. The position of His Majesty's Government was fully explained to the French Ambassador on September 7 and you will find this recorded in paragraph 3 of my telegram to Paris No. 262.<sup>3</sup> I said on that occasion that 'I did not think that British opinion, although it might change as the situation developed, would be willing to contemplate being involved in war on direct account of Czechoslovakia. While this was certainly true, I thought it was also probable that if France were obliged to act in discharge of her obligations, British opinion would realise that we could not allow France to be in trouble without wishing to do our best to help her. Although Great Britain might feel obliged to support France in a conflict, if only because it would recognise that British interests were involved in any threat to French security, this did not mean that we should be willing automatically to find ourselves at war with Germany, because France might be involved in discharge of obligations which Great Britain did not share.' Please also see passage in message transmitted in my telegram No. 354<sup>4</sup> which says 'France having thus become involved it seems to His Majesty's Government inevitable that the sequence of events must result in a general conflict from which Great Britain could not stand aside'.

3. We have not therefore, as you imply, gone so far as to declare 'that in the event of aggression on Czechoslovakia France would carry out her treaty obligations and England would stand by France', and still less that we should be prepared to intervene on the sole ground of a German attack on Czechoslovakia.

4. The foregoing is for your own information and guidance only.  
Repeated to Paris.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. See No. 834, note 1.

<sup>3</sup> Not printed. This telegram summarized the interview reported in No. 798. The paragraph numbers in the telegram correspond to those in the despatch.

<sup>4</sup> No. 815.

## No. 882

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 286 Telegraphic [C 9920/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 14, 1938, 8.40 p.m.*

Following for Lord Runciman from Prime Minister:—

I am going to Berchtesgaden tomorrow Thursday and expect to hold conversations Friday and possibly Saturday.

I may want to ask you if you will come and join me there—and hope if I do so you would be able and willing to come at short notice.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On September 15 the Prime Minister sent Lord Runciman a telephone message from Berchtesgaden, asking if he could return to London for consultation with the Prime Minister and his colleagues the following day. The message added that (i) it would be important in any announcement that was made, 'to make it clear that Lord Runciman was not abandoning his Mission, but going to London at the Prime Minister's invitation', and (ii) that 'the Prime Minister would be glad if Lord Runciman would make representations to both parties to refrain from any action which might give rise to further incidents, pending the results of the conversation contemplated in the near future between the Prime Minister and the Führer'. Lord Runciman replied the same evening that he was complying with these requests.

### No. 883

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 14, 10.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 252 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9796/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 14, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

M. Daladier did not look very pleased after I had delivered my message. He said he hoped the Prime Minister's interview would produce good results; but that his own proposal had been for a conversation 'à trois'. It had several times been suggested to himself to have a meeting with Herr Hitler but he had always refused as he had felt a representative of Great Britain should be present.

I pointed out the terribly dangerous conditions existing in Czechoslovakia, the chief consideration seemed to be speed: hence the departure of the Prime Minister early tomorrow morning.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. In this telegram Sir E. Phipps stated that he had carried out the instructions sent to him in No. 875.

### No. 884

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 14, 10.45 p.m.)*  
*No. 583 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9786/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 14, 1938

This afternoon at end of an audience for which I had applied, President Benes informed me that while he did not know what intentions of Reich might be he felt very doubtful and anxious.

In its social, political, economic and military system Germany was now so dynamically organised that it was difficult for such an organisation to remain passive. Field-Marshal Göring, Dr. Goebbels, Herr Himmler and other extremists were in the ascendant and were so fanatic that he feared that they



did not want peaceful settlement. Although he was . . .<sup>1</sup> and was cleverer than the others, he too was possessed, so Dr. Benes believed, by pan-German aim of first uniting all Germans and then acquiring more space for their expansion. This was in accordance with programme set forth in his book which he had closely followed in other respects hitherto. Existence of Czechoslovakia was therefore menaced and Herr Hitler was furious because Czechoslovakia represented first case in which he met with determined resistance.

Nevertheless Dr. Benes did not think recent incidents and attacks . . .<sup>2</sup> had been organised from the Reich or the Sudeten Party headquarters. He thought they were sporadic . . .<sup>2</sup> spontaneous although perhaps directed by reckless local leaders. Reich had however organized . . .<sup>2</sup> amongst Sudeten Germans and attempts had been made to supply them with arms but these . . .<sup>2</sup> had not organized recent demonstrations.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain. The reference appears to be to Herr Hitler.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

### No. 885

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 15)*  
*No. 437 Saving: Telegraphic [C 9808/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 14, 1938

Paris telegram No. 579 Saving<sup>1</sup> of September 8th, paragraph 6.

Field-Marshal Göring told me most positively that if the Czechs provoked an incident (*sic*)<sup>2</sup> which compelled Germany to take action, the latter would not attempt to move against France by land or by air.

I am convinced that if anything happens Germany will remain strictly on the defensive in the west, so as to enable Government to represent to nation that they are the aggressed and not the aggressors. Further object of this would be to try to the last to keep Britain out. German plan would I believe possibly be to crush Czechoslovakia as quickly as could be (fortnight according to Göring) in hope that Britain would not have come in before and then to propose armistice on basis of incorporation in Germany of Sudeten areas.

<sup>1</sup> No. 807.

<sup>2</sup> This word is in the file copy of the telegram.

### No. 886

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 15, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 449 Telegraphic [C 9803/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 15, 1938, 12.10 a.m.

Former German Ambassador in Rome lunched with me today.<sup>1</sup>

He told me that Dr. Goebbels was, in respect of Czech question, definitely

<sup>1</sup> i.e. September 14.

on the side of the moderates. This is interesting as it confirmed my own impression at Nuremberg.

Since he was seeing General Keitel, who is a friend of his, later in the afternoon, I asked Herr von Hassell to tell the General that while nothing will be more distasteful to British nation than to go to war with Germany again, it would be impossible for us to keep out of it if Germany acted in any way which would compel France to come to the aid of Czechoslovakia. Herr von Hassell undertook to give this message faithfully and, in strict confidence, I told him of Prime Minister's projected visit to Chancellor in interests of peace.

I thought it as well that army should be aware of this effort.

#### No. 887

*Sir N. Charles (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 15, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 574 Telegraphic [C 9823/1941/18]*

ROME, September 15, 1938, 1.45 a.m.

Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs received me this evening at my request. I said that I had come to talk about happenings of last few days and would be grateful if for example he could give me his opinion as to exactly what Herr Hitler meant to convey by his speech on September 12. Did it mean that the Führer had issued an ultimatum that the Prague Government should grant autonomy to Sudetens or did it mean more?

Count Ciano said that it meant more, and this had been made clear in bulletin issued by Italian Government (in) last night's 'Informazione Diplomatica' (my telegram No. 570<sup>1</sup>). In answer to further questions Minister for Foreign Affairs said this could be taken to mean that Sudetens should be given the right to decide their own fate, separate from Czechoslovakia and joined [*sic*, ? join] with Germany. I said that I was indeed sorry to hear it for if this was the aim of Germany, the situation in my personal opinion was extremely grave. Count Ciano seemed rather taken aback and I resumed saying the most that Germany should or could ask for in their wildest dreams were Karlsbad Eight Points as mentioned in first bulletin issued by Italian Government on September 9, but here Count Ciano interjected that it was already too late for that as was made evident in their second bulletin of yesterday.

I then asked Count Ciano whether or no German demands now meant that there should be a plebiscite. I added that I had noticed both Hitler and Italian Government seemed studiously to have avoided the use of actual word 'plebiscite'.

Count Ciano answered 'yes'. I said that it seemed to me a dangerous solution in the present state of tension. Count Ciano said that it could be held under international control and I said that it would be a question of months and fraught with risk. Count Ciano then became more forthcoming; he said that he hoped and trusted that war would be avoided. He was sure

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. See No. 863, note 1.

that neither His Majesty's Government nor France nor Germany desired it: Italy was strongly opposed to it and was doing her best to exercise a moderating influence (so far as I know Count Ciano has never said as much as this before). I said that I was exceedingly glad to hear this but that Signor Farinacci in his press messages from Nuremberg did not seem to share his views. Count Ciano shrugged his shoulders and implied too much attention should not be allotted to Signor Farinacci's outpourings. Count Ciano continued that in spite of the disturbing news from Prague this afternoon he wished to repeat that the situation was not yet 'desperate' and he felt that there were 'many chances still left of coming to peaceful solution'. The matter rested largely now with Lord Runciman. I said that I thought that Lord Runciman was in a very difficult position. On my leaving Count Ciano said that he always tried to remain an optimist though not one of the kind who would walk in the [sic] front of a tram with his head in the air.

Repeated to Berlin and Prague.

### No. 888

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 15, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 584 Telegraphic [C 9820/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 15, 1938, 2.45 a.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

President Benes gave me following account of Sudeten question.

His last proposals conceded substance of Karlsbad programme although he had refrained from saying so openly for fear of humiliating and antagonising public opinion. As it was he had met with strong protests and difficulties. He had had to take upon himself responsibility of making his proposals and of subsequently securing their acceptance by his Government and public by whom his broadcast speech on Saturday had been well received.

He himself feared that his proposals would threaten democratic structure of the State and permit of introduction of a totalitarian régime in German area. It was a strong objection that this would involve sacrifice of German democratic elements though he hoped that in long run democracy would return both to the Sudeten country and to the Reich.

If there were an 'Anschluss' of German area with the Reich, Germany would be so on the top of Czechoslovakia as to destroy her independent existence economically, strategically etc. A plebiscite (to which I myself had made no allusion) would mean disintegration of the State and, as he said more than once, civil war. Sudeten party leaders had conjured up a radical spirit which had now taken control. A Sudeten deputy had just told Dr. Hodza that since . . .<sup>2</sup> September 7 Herr Frank and extremists were in charge of situation. President believed that the Reich did not want a settlement.

When he had made his last proposals he had heard from a reliable source

<sup>1</sup> No. 884.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

that party leaders had been surprised by their generosity and had decided that evening that such proposals could not be refused. They did not however know whether they would be approved at Nuremberg and Herr Frank had therefore provoked incidents at Mährisch-Ostrau on September 7 to keep the question open until after the Congress. Then came the speech of Herr Hitler, incidents in Sudeten area and ultimatum which meant that at dictation of Herr Hitler and of their own Sudeten extremists the Party leaders refused to negotiate.

Dr. Benes said that so far as he was concerned the door remained open for negotiations and he was always prepared to continue negotiations on the basis of his proposals and to prove to France and England, to Germany and to the world desire of Czechoslovakia for peace. The attitude would be made clear to Sudeten leaders and Dr. Benes made a note of my suggestion that it might also be announced in the press.

Once more he spoke to me of putting into effect such of his proposals as could be realised without prior discussion with Sudeten leaders e.g. in appointment of officials and in regard to Budget which would come up for discussion in October.

In the course of our conversation Dr. Benes mentioned that some Sudeten Germans lived in areas such as Egerland which in his opinion could have been excluded from Czechoslovakia without endangering the existence of the State. During the Peace Conference he personally had suggested in private conversations or letters their exclusion but suggestion had never been seriously discussed nor had it been agreed to by other members of his Delegation. Their exclusion now would of course be no adequate solution and would in any case be impossible in the present circumstances as such a precedent could not be admitted. Parliament and public opinion would demand as a principle that the integrity of the frontier should be maintained.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

#### No. 889

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 15, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 587 Telegraphic [C 9806/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 15, 1938, 2.45 a.m.

Following from Lord Runciman<sup>1</sup> from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin, for Mr. Strang.

Henlein was not unfriendly and we parted on good terms. I hear that he left almost at once to see Herr Hitler.

I asked whether he wished to break off relations with Lord Runciman's Mission in view of his attitude about the negotiations. He said 'No' and added that he would instruct Herr Kundt to keep in close touch with us.

<sup>1</sup> i.e. from Lord Runciman's Mission.

Herr Henlein said that if negotiations were resumed they must be on the basis of a plebiscite. I think as a matter of fact Sudetens hope Lord Runciman's Mission may make attainment of this policy easier for them. They were of course genuinely enraged at defence measures taken by the Government and at incidents for which they denied all responsibility. On such matters it was useless to argue with them and I took the line that there was to be no talk about guilt or innocence. Object of all our efforts should be to find a way to internal peace and to avoid international war; but even this did not appeal to the mood of the moment.

Repeated to Berlin.

**No. 890**

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 15, 11.30 a.m.)  
*No. 450 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9807/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 15, 1938

The news of the Prime Minister's visit came last night as a bombshell and was greeted by the public with enormous relief and satisfaction.

The newspapers have been instructed to publish the communiqué across the front page but to abstain from any comment whatsoever at all events today.

At the same time the latest reports of the riots in Sudetenland have created a deep impression and even those who were inclined to regard the German presentation of the previous incidents as exaggerated are now convinced that it is out of the question for the Sudetens to continue to form part of the Czechoslovak State. It is assumed that Mr. Chamberlain will arrange a solution on this basis and it is felt that not a moment must be lost if the situation is not to degenerate hopelessly. The practical difficulties of a plebiscite or a similar solution are not considered, or if they are it is thought that they must simply be overcome.

Should the Prime Minister's journey fail to secure agreement, public opinion under the influence of the latest news from Czechoslovakia is likely fully to support the Chancellor in any measures he may decide to take.

Repeated to Munich.

**No. 891**

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 15, 5.30 p.m.)  
*No. 591 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9825/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 15, 1938

Dr. Hodza's office has communicated to Lord Runciman's mission the following communiqué, which is said to have been published by the Sudeten German Party this morning at Asch:—

'The leaders of the Sudeten German Party at a meeting at Asch announce to the whole world with full consciousness of their responsibility that the Czech democracy is definitely dropping its hypocritical mask. Defenceless women and children, hundreds of dead make the accusation. Under the pretext of humanity assassination and pillage are going on. What is happening today in the heart of Europe can only be compared to the Bolshevik atrocities in Spain. The Sudeten Germans through the mouth of their popular leaders announce to the whole world that they made every effort up to the last moment to find a pacific solution. The Czech Government has, however, rejected all the demands of Conrad Henlein. Under the circumstances which exist in Czech territory it is entirely natural that the Sudeten Germans should defend by all means their lives and those of their families against the hordes which are assassinating and pillaging.'

I learn that the first result of this announcement in Liberec has been a general strike and that all business there is at a standstill.

The German wireless at 1 p.m. broadcasts what is stated to be a proclamation by Herr Henlein to 'Meine Volksgenossen' in which he declared that in 1919 the Sudeten Germans had been denied the right of self-determination which had been formerly promised to them and forced against their will into the Czech State. They had nevertheless done their utmost to cooperate; all their attempts to reach an honourable agreement had failed; therefore 'we wish to live as free German men! We wish for peace and work again in our homes! We wish to go home to the Reich.'

Repeated to Berlin and to Berchtesgaden for the Prime Minister.

## No. 892

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 15, 7.30 p.m.)

*No. 595 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9839/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 15, 1938

An official communiqué dated September 14th states that the Sudeten German Party issued on that date a communiqué in which it endeavoured to lay on the Government the blame for the final breakdown of the Nationalities negotiations on the grounds that the Government have not replied to the Sudeten German Party's four demands, and also blaming the Government for the regrettable incidents of the last two days.

The communiqué says that it must be stated that the Sudeten German Party repeatedly emphasized in its declarations that the fundamental condition for the solution of the Sudeten German problem was order and security. The responsibility for the maintenance of order was in every country naturally a matter for the State. When therefore public order was disturbed it was the clear duty of the Government to maintain order by all lawful means. The police authorities had persisted with the greatest restraint.

and wherever possible they had prevented bloodshed resulting from the incidents which were clearly a result of a deliberate plan.

As illegal acts had for some days attained dangerous proportions the Government proclaimed martial law in eleven Bohemian districts. The Sudeten German Party replied with an ultimatum demanding the withdrawal of these measures, giving the Government six hours in which to reply. The President of the Council told Deputy Frank, who communicated this demand, that he was in principle ready to negotiate with the Party's representatives over all their demands but that such negotiations could not be continued on the telephone. The Party's representatives were invited to go to Prague and to agree, as a preliminary to further proceedings, to a proclamation by which the Sudeten German Party would publicly appeal to its members to keep peace and order. This communication disposed of the question of the form of negotiations but despite this invitation, which was a token of the Government's good will, the Party had not sent its representatives to Prague. Subsequently Lord Runciman's mission had negotiated with Deputy Frank, who assured them that as soon as the consultation of the Party's delegation with Conrad Henlein at Asch was at an end its authorised member would put himself in telephonic communication with the President of the Council. This promise was not fulfilled, the only reply being the telephonic communication to the Prime Minister's office announcing the end of negotiations (my telegram No. 571<sup>1</sup>).

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 86g.

#### No. 893

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 15, 8.0 p.m.)

No. 594 *Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9838/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 15, 1938

According to a usually reliable journalistic source there is considerable agitation amongst army officers in favour of overthrowing the Government and setting up a military (? régime)<sup>1</sup> under General Krejci.

My Military Attaché has at present no confirmation of this.

Please inform War Office.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.

#### No. 894

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 16)*

No. 596 *Saving: Telegraphic [C 9872/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 15, 1938

I saw the Minister for Foreign Affairs today and he asked me to express to Your Lordship the warm thanks of himself and of his Government for

the magnificent gesture of the Prime Minister in going to Berchtesgaden. M. Bonnet hopes and believes that nothing but good can result from the interview with Herr Hitler.

His Excellency added that he could promise me that he would strongly advise his Government to accept any proposal regarding Czechoslovakia that Mr. Chamberlain might make, whether it were accepted by the Czechs or not.

M. Léger has just rung me up on the telephone to express his warm admiration for the 'noble and courageous gesture' of the Prime Minister.

M. Millerand, the former President of the Republic, called while I was with M. Herriot at the Chamber of Deputies, to convey his congratulations. In my absence he was received by a member of my staff, and remarked with great emotion that he wished to express his gratitude as a Frenchman for the Prime Minister's action, which he described as wonderful. M. Millerand added that in speaking thus he was expressing the feelings of all young Frenchmen. 'Since last night we breathe', he observed. He remarked that Great Britain's attitude throughout the Czechoslovak affair had been wonderfully calm and dignified, and that France was proud to be associated with her.

M. Herriot, on whom I called, began by saying that the Prime Minister's action was noble, generous and bold. He feared, however, that it might unduly increase Herr Hitler's prestige. He was constrained to admit, however, that events had moved so rapidly that some quick and decisive step had to be taken. He is filled with alarm for the future, but did not indicate what measures it was possible now to take to avert the coming German danger.

M. Paul Reynaud called on me this morning. He also began by praising the Prime Minister's decision, and he also expressed some fear lest Herr Hitler should be intoxicated by the added prestige that he would derive from Mr. Chamberlain's visit; but M. Reynaud likewise was unable to suggest any alternative course of action.

M. Bonnet told me that he and other members of the French Government had been rung up yesterday on the telephone from London by well-known British Members of Parliament enquiring whether it was true that the French Government had changed their attitude in the last two days. He remarked smilingly that it was difficult enough to answer questions of French Parliamentarians without having to reply to awkward questions from foreign ones over the telephone.

The press this evening continue to express their eager good wishes for the Prime Minister's success. Opinion is summed up by a leading article in the semi-official 'Temps' which says that the meeting may mark the beginning of a whole new policy of co-operation; if it fails to do so Europe may despair of her future.



*Notes by Mr. Chamberlain of his conversation with Herr Hitler at  
Berchtesgaden on September 15, 1938*

[C 10084/1941/18]

Minute of the Conversation between the Prime Minister and the Führer,  
15th September, 1938.

This is a bare record.

I began the conversation by saying that since I have been Prime Minister I have been anxious to improve Anglo-German relations and have been looking for opportunities to do so but that various incidents had occurred which made it difficult. I had always hoped that we should find a chance to renew efforts but during the last few weeks events had occurred which had aroused such feelings and apprehension that I saw the whole prospect of a renewal of these Anglo-German relations disappearing and I felt that on that account, apart from the particular dispute we were engaged on, it was essential to come and have a personal talk with him.

To that the Führer replied that he had been greatly impressed by the fact that I had been ready at my age to take so much trouble to come all the way to see him. He wished to thank me for it and to say that he himself warmly welcomed my visit and so did all the people of Germany—as I could see for myself on my way here.

I then said that I was much obliged to him for his remarks and that I thought we might perhaps usefully devote this afternoon to a clarification of each other's point of view so that each might know exactly what the other had in his mind, leaving, perhaps, the Czechoslovak problem till to-morrow. I then went on to say that many people in England thought that he was not sincere, that his words in respect to Peace were only words and that he had behind them a plan which was not at all consistent with what he was saying. I said I did not myself accept that view but I welcomed an opportunity of a frank talk with him to see where we stood.

He then said that however desirable it might be to explore one another's views on general questions between the two countries, there was a question which was very urgent and could not wait. According to to-day's information 300 Sudeten Germans had been killed and many more injured and that produced a situation which demanded instant solution, so that it would be better if we started at once on it; to which I said 'All right: go ahead.'

The Führer then began a long account of what he had done; how he had made an agreement with Poland which finally settled territorial questions as far as himself and Poland were concerned. He had stated that if the Saar was retained by France that would raise a problem which would have to be settled as he considered the Saar ought to belong to Germany. The Saar however had returned to Germany and accordingly there was no territorial dispute between him and France. He had publicly disclaimed any idea of attempting to recover Alsace and Lorraine. As far as we were concerned he

had made a naval treaty under which he had limited his strength in regard to ours, but that treaty was made on the understanding that we would not go to war—that there was going to be no war between us and Germany, and if people talked as they had been doing lately of the possibility of England coming into a war against Germany, then it would be better to denounce that treaty.

When I reached that point in the translation by Schmidt<sup>1</sup> I interrupted and said 'Does the Führer mean that he might denounce the treaty before we go to war?' He replied that, unless there was an understanding on both sides that in no circumstances would we go to war with one another, in his opinion it would be impossible that the treaty could stand, because in the case of war being declared he would have put himself at a disadvantage which he was not prepared to do, unless there was an understanding.

I did not challenge him, however, on that, except to say that I wished him to understand that there was a difference between a warning and a threat. I reminded him that after 1914 it was said that if we had then told Germany that we would have come in, there would have been no war, and I thought that if nations went to war it was desirable that they should understand beforehand what were the necessary implications, and that he would have some justification for complaint against me if I allowed him to think that in no circumstances would we go to war, when in fact there might well be conditions when we might have to come in. He said a warning and a threat had the same effect. I dissented from that and said they were two entirely different things, but I did not pursue that subject because I wanted to hear the rest of what he had to say.

He said that he had from his youth been obsessed with the racial theory and he felt that Germans were one, but he had drawn a distinction between the possible and the impossible and he recognises that there are places where Germans are where it is impossible to bring them into the Reich; but where they are on the frontier it is a different matter, and he is himself concerned with ten millions of Germans, three millions of whom are in Czechoslovakia. He felt therefore that those Germans should come into the Reich. They wanted to and he was determined that they should come in. Apart from that, he said, there was no other place where frontiers made any territorial difficulty. He spoke of Memel and said as far as that was concerned he was glad to leave that as it was as long as the Lithuanians followed the Memel Statute. It was impossible that Czechoslovakia should remain like a spearhead in the side of Germany.

So I said 'Hold on a minute; there is one point on which I want to be clear and I will explain why: you say that the three million Sudeten Germans must be included in the Reich; would you be satisfied with that and is there nothing more that you want? I ask because there are many people who think that is not all; that you wish to dismember Czechoslovakia.'

He then launched into a long speech; he was out for a racial unity and he did not want a lot of Czechs, all he wanted was Sudeten Germans. As

<sup>1</sup> Herr Hitler's interpreter.

regards the 'spearhead in his side' he would not feel safe unless the Sudeten Germans were incorporated in the Reich; he could not feel he had got rid of the danger until the abolition of the treaty between Russia and Czechoslovakia.

I said: 'Supposing it were modified, so that Czechoslovakia were no longer bound to go to the assistance of Russia if Russia were attacked, and on the other hand Czechoslovakia were debarred from giving asylum to Russian forces in her aerodromes or elsewhere; would that remove your difficulty?'

To that his reply was that if the Sudeten Germans came into the Reich, then the Hungarian minority would secede, the Polish minority would secede, the Slovak minority would secede—and what was left would be so small that he would not bother his head about it.

I then said: 'Well, you have stated pretty clearly what your view is and I will re-state it to show that I have got it right.' I did so and he confirmed it.

I said that as a practical man without prejudice to the theoretical question of secession I saw considerable practical difficulties about the secession of the Sudeten Germans because I understood that even if, for example, the areas containing 80 per cent. of Germans were taken into the Reich, there would still be a very considerable number of Germans left outside, and moreover there would be a considerable number of Czechoslovaks in the German area, and 'therefore it looks as though, for the solution of the problem in your sense, it would require more than a change of boundaries; it would also require a transfer of population; have you got any ideas about that?'

He said that percentages of Germans could not come into this. Where the Germans are in a majority, the territory ought to pass to Germany and for the rest, the Czechoslovaks in German Sudetenland should be allowed to pass out and the Germans in the other part to pass in; or alternatively each minority could remain where it was under suitable safeguards.

I was then going on to some further questions on the subject when he said: 'But all this seems to be academic; I want to get down to realities. Three hundred Sudetens have been killed and things of that kind cannot go on; the thing has got to be settled at once: I am determined to settle it: I do not care whether there is a world war or not: I am determined to settle it and to settle it soon and I am prepared to risk a world war rather than allow this to drag on.'

To that I replied: 'If the Führer is determined to settle this matter by force without waiting even for a discussion between ourselves to take place, what did he let me come here for? I have wasted my time. If on the other hand he is prepared to discuss the question with me as to whether he is prepared to find a peaceful solution, why does he not make a joint appeal, to be signed by both of us perhaps, to both sides to refrain from incidents and to keep quiet while we have time to converse?'

He replied: 'I could not appeal to the victims: how could I appeal to them while they are flocking across the German frontier because their homes and villages are being burnt? It is impossible for me to do that because the German people would not understand it and I cannot do it.'

I said: 'I do not see then how we can make any further progress unless the Führer has got anything further to suggest.'

He then said: 'Well, if the British Government were prepared to accept the idea of secession in principle and to say so, there might be a chance then to have a talk. If you tell me that the British Government cannot accept the principle of secession, then I agree it is of no use to proceed with our conversations. If on the other hand they are prepared to accept this idea, we might settle our procedure.'

I said that I was not in a position to give such an assurance on behalf of the British Government who had not authorised me to say anything of the kind, and moreover I could not possibly make such a declaration without consulting the French Government and Lord Runciman. But I could give him my personal opinion, which was that on principle I had nothing to say against the separation of the Sudeten Germans from the rest of Czechoslovakia, provided that the practical difficulties could be overcome.

I continued: 'In view of what I have said I think the only thing I can suggest is that we should adjourn our conversation, that I should go back and consult my colleagues and that we should meet again when I have heard what they have got to say.'

He said: 'That is a possible course to take and in the circumstances that is the best thing to do.'

I said: 'Supposing we agree to do that, can the situation be kept as it is now, or will not something further happen which will upset it?'

He said: 'Well, the German position is that they have a great military machine, and once that military machine is put into operation it would be impossible to stop it. But I am willing to go as far as this: I will give an assurance that I will not give an order for that machine to begin to operate if I can help it; but I am bound to say that if further incidents should occur it might be impossible for me to refrain from giving the order.'

I said that at any rate I hoped he would do his best to restrain such incidents.

He said: 'It would help if the Czechoslovak Government would recall their State Police from the Sudeten German districts, would confine their soldiers to barracks and withdraw mobilisation.'

I said that it was unreasonable to expect them to withdraw mobilisation when their country was in danger of being attacked, but with regard to the other suggestions, I would do my best to influence the Czechoslovak Government, if the Führer would do his best to keep his people quiet. He said he would.

We then began to discuss the press communiqué.

N. C.

*Translation of notes made by Herr Schmidt<sup>1</sup> of Mr. Chamberlain's conversation with Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden, September 15, 1938*  
[C 11970/11169/18]

After Mr. Chamberlain, in the course of his introductory remarks, had averred that he had always worked for an Anglo-German rapprochement, he said that he now had a feeling<sup>2</sup> that the opportunity of a direct conversation was calculated to improve the relations between the two countries. Before us lay the extraordinary gravity of the situation during the last weeks. He had therefore undertaken the journey to Germany in order, by means of a direct conversation with the Führer, to attempt to clarify the situation.

The Führer answered that he was well aware of the full significance of the Prime Minister's journey. The German nation also welcomed it. Fundamentally, he also, the Führer, had always worked in the sense of an Anglo-German rapprochement, as much in his speeches as in his writings.<sup>3</sup> He must, however, admit that in recent years his faith in the possibility of such a rapprochement had suffered very severe blows. Nevertheless, he would regard himself as fortunate if means could be found of improving the political relations between the two nations.

Mr. Chamberlain answered that he fully valued the words of appreciation which the Führer had spoken to him. It was, in fact, for a man of his age, no light thing to undertake a journey of this character. The fact that he had undertaken this expedition to Germany should serve as evidence to the Führer and to the German nation both of the importance which he, Mr. Chamberlain, attached to an Anglo-German rapprochement, as well as of his sincere desire to attempt everything which was possible to find a way out of the present difficulties.

His<sup>4</sup> first conversation might perhaps most usefully serve to exchange general ideas in regard to the situation, so that both parties could rightly understand one another and see whether agreement was possible or not. He, Mr. Chamberlain, must frankly admit that many Englishmen regarded the Führer's speeches solely as words, behind which were concealed carefully prepared plans. He, Mr. Chamberlain, however, regarded the Führer as a man who, from a strong feeling for the sufferings of his nation, had carried through the renaissance of the German nation with extraordinary success. He had the greatest respect for this man, and he had come to Germany in order to seek<sup>5</sup> by means of a frank exchange of views, the solution of the

<sup>1</sup> German interpreter. For the compilation of these notes and their transmission to the Foreign Office, see Nos. 930, 931, 983, and 985. The notes were transmitted in German.

<sup>2</sup> This should read: '... he had a feeling that precisely now the opportunity ...'. This and subsequent emendations have been made from the German original.

<sup>3</sup> This should read: 'publications'.

<sup>4</sup> This should read: 'This first conversation ...'.

<sup>5</sup> This should read: 'to seek, at the centre of German recovery, by means of a frank exchange ...'.

present difficulties. He hoped that on the basis of this exchange of views with the Führer, that both parties should be precisely informed of the views of the other, and that, on the basis of this precise knowledge of the attitude of the Führer to the various political problems of the day, he could then, with double confidence, work further for an Anglo-German rapprochement.

The Führer then declared that above all problems to be discussed stood the Sudeten German question, which at the moment had left the sphere of theoretical expressions of opinion, since the situation was moving from hour to hour to an open crisis. It therefore seemed to him necessary to make a beginning with this question at once since it was decisive for the future development of Anglo-German relations. He did not wish to spend too long discussing the past, for in the past there lay too much separating their two countries and too little in common between them. What was decisive was whether, and how far in present circumstances, agreement could be reached between the two countries on a common attitude to adopt towards this question.

The situation was very grave and a decision must be reached, by one means or another, in the quickest possible time. Under these circumstances he must state quite openly that there would be no point in carrying on a discussion in the manner of previous diplomatic conversations. The long journey which the Prime Minister had made would not have proved worth while if they were to stop short at mere formalities.

For a better understanding of the situation he could assure the Prime Minister that the whole importance of his own position rested upon the confidence which the German people had in him. He was no Dictator, and had not established his power in Germany with military force, but had built it up on the confidence of the nation, whose mouthpiece and representative he was, and whose interests he had to protect. He also, therefore, was not a free agent. He could not go against the promises and assurances which he had once given to the German people and which secured him their confidence. He could not, therefore, either remain silent or inactive in a situation in which the whole German nation expected him to take effective action. Were he to fail to fulfil these expectations he would lose the confidence of the people, and the path he was to take was therefore determined for him in advance. If other statesmen were subject to the influence of their Parliaments he must govern his actions in accordance with the wishes, not indeed of a Parliament, but of the people and, in particular, of the Party. Were he to fail to do what was expected of him he would not simply do away with the problem at issue but rather undermine his own position.<sup>6</sup>

He had, then, given the German people certain<sup>7</sup> promises: first of all to free them, by one means or another, from the suffering caused by the Treaty of Versailles. For the road he had to take to attain that end he had received from the German people a Power of Attorney in the form of an Enabling Act

<sup>6</sup> This should read: 'he would not do away with the problems at issue but would, if anything, destroy his own status . . . '.

<sup>7</sup> This should read: 'definite'.

passed by Parliament. If he were not to carry out his promises this Power of Attorney would cease to be valid. Even if this would perhaps have no immediate result, the psychological effect of the non-fulfilment of his assurances could be very considerable.

He must add that the objective which he had set himself when building up the Party and later the State had been a limited objective. He did not wish to go into details of the reasons for or value and advantages of this policy: he only wished to point out that the fact of the racial basis of the National Socialist Party and with it of the German people excluded any form of Imperialism. Furthermore, he had never left the outside world in any doubt that he knew perfectly well how to distinguish between what was possible and what was impossible. He knew that it was impossible to unite all the Germans in Europe. Nor did the German national groups who lived far away from the Reich expect to be united within it. Furthermore he had excluded all questions of this kind which would open afresh old wounds and in which the success to be attained would be disproportionate to the weight of sacrifice involved.

People in England had often reproached him because they thought that appetite grew with eating and that after the attainment of one objective he would always proceed to new demands. But he must draw attention to the fact that no support for this was to be found anywhere in the whole attitude he had taken up. Where Germany had admitted final frontiers, this admission had been carried into effect with a most exact precision in all spheres of policy, literature and practice.<sup>8</sup> The present position was in fact that—

(1) Germany had brought about an understanding with Poland in spite of comprehensible difficulties.

(2) Germany had limited the strength of her fleet, of her own free will, to a certain proportion of British naval power. The precondition for this agreement was, of course, the mutual determination never again to make war on the other contracting party. If, therefore, England were to continue<sup>9</sup> to make it clear that in certain circumstances she would intervene against Germany, the precondition for the Naval Agreement would cease to hold, and it would be more honest for Germany to denounce the agreement.

On the British Prime Minister interpolating the question whether this denunciation would be contemplated by Germany before a conflict broke out or at the outbreak itself, the Führer replied that, if England continued to recognise the possibility of intervention against Germany, while Germany had herself concluded the Naval Agreement with the intention of never again making war on England, a one-sided disadvantage for Germany must ensue; it would therefore be more sincere and more honest in such a case to terminate the treaty relationship.

(3) Germany had assured Holland and Belgium of treaty guarantees.

<sup>8</sup> This should read: 'this acknowledgement had been put into practice, most precisely, in all spheres of politics and literature'.

<sup>9</sup> This should read: 'If, therefore, England were over and over again to make clear that . . . '.

(4) After the settlement of the question of the Saar, and without taking up again the problem of Alsace-Lorraine, Germany had declared to France that there were now no more territorial questions outstanding between the two countries.

Germany had nevertheless put forward a general demand in all clarity: in any circumstances return to the Reich, to which they had belonged for a thousand years, must be made possible for the 10 million Germans who lived in Austria and Czechoslovakia, and whose earnest desire it was to return to Germany. In the case of the 7 million Germans in the Ostmark this demand had been met. The return to the Reich of the  $3\frac{1}{2}$  million Germans in Czechoslovakia he would make possible at all costs. He would face any danger and even the risk of war for this end. Here the limit had been reached where the rest of the world could do what it liked; he would not yield a single step.

Mr. Chamberlain asked in this connexion whether then the difficulties with Czechoslovakia would be at an end with the return to the Reich of the  $3\frac{1}{2}$  million Sudeten Germans. The question was being asked in England whether this was all that Germany demanded or whether she did not aim beyond this at the disintegration of the Czechoslovak State.

The Führer replied that apart from the demands of the Sudeten Germans similar demands would, of course, be made by the Poles, Hungarians and Ukrainians living in Czechoslovakia, and that in the long run it would be impossible to ignore these demands.

The Führer then continued his former argument by referring to the fact that, in the case of Austria, Italy might at first quite understandably have supported<sup>10</sup> her own interests, but that she had recognised the justice of the necessary development of things and had taken up an attitude of truly loyal friendship. He had therefore immediately after the 'Anschluss'<sup>11</sup> guaranteed for all time the Italo-German frontier as an expression of the thanks of the whole German nation, and had thus set the seal on the sincere and lasting friendship between the two nations. Germany's frontiers with Yugoslavia and Hungary were also regarded as final.

There therefore remained only one problem, that of Czechoslovakia, which he would solve by one means or another. This he was absolutely determined to do. He would do it in his lifetime and would bring about a rapid solution. He was 49 years old, and if against his wishes Germany were to be involved in a world war over the Czechoslovak question, he wished to lead his country through this crisis in the full strength of manhood, and not to have to carry out this task at an advanced age or to leave it to a successor.

The Czechoslovak question was nevertheless the last major problem to be solved.

Finally, Germany would of course always maintain her demand for colonies. This was, however, not a bellicose demand. But it too must one day be granted and Germany would never give it up.

<sup>10</sup> This should read: 'Italy above all, assuredly and understandably, might have put her own interests first . . .'.  
<sup>11</sup> This should read: 'the Anschluss of Austria to Germany'.



With regard to the Czechs he must, however, state once more that he would solve this problem by one means or another. He wished there to be no doubt of his absolute determination no longer to allow a small subordinate country to treat the great German Reich, with its thousand years of history, as something inferior.

With regard to the Führer's remarks about the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, the British Prime Minister observed that he could quite understand the German attitude up to a certain point. A very reasonable agreement had been made about naval strengths in the belief that there could be no question of war between the two countries. If conditions had now so altered that the possibility of a war must be taken into account, the basis of the naval agreement had, indeed, disappeared. Up to that point he could follow the Führer, but he must add that no proper distinction was made on the German side between a threat and a warning. After 1914 England had been reproached on many sides because she had not made her intentions clear enough. The war<sup>12</sup> might perhaps have been avoided, these critics objected, if England had taken up a clearer attitude. When two people<sup>13</sup> are on the point of going into conflict with one another they must be perfectly clear in advance of the consequences of such a conflict. Britain had acted in this sense, and had made no threats but had only uttered a warning. It was now the business of the Führer to make a decision on the basis of these facts which were known to him. No reproach could be made against England for giving this warning: on the contrary, she could have been criticised for failing to give it.

The Führer replied that he could follow the Prime Minister's thoughts to a certain extent, but he believed that things often reached such a point that, after a certain moment, little could be done to change the unalterable course of events. In his opinion a British warning would have come too late in 1914 as well, since the difficulties had by then reached too advanced a stage.

Turning<sup>14</sup> to the naval question, the Führer declared that he must adhere to the fundamental view whereby the basis of this treaty was to be seen simply and solely in a kind of obligation of both parties in no circumstances to make war on one another. If therefore England showed from time to time that she must, nevertheless, in certain circumstances, reckon with a conflict against Germany, the logical basis of the Naval Agreement was done away with. While one party undertook a voluntary limitation of its naval strength, the other party left<sup>15</sup> all possibilities open; and it was precisely at the moment when a warning was given that the disadvantage for the former party made itself felt.

Mr. Chamberlain thanked the Führer for his clear and frank explanations of the German attitude. He believed that he had rightly understood the Führer to say that he had made the demand for the return of the 10 million Germans to the Reich for racial reasons. Seven million Germans had come

<sup>12</sup> This should read: 'The world war . . . '.

<sup>13</sup> This should read: 'two peoples . . . '.

<sup>14</sup> This should read: 'Returning . . . '.

<sup>15</sup> This should read: 'preserved all possibilities to itself'.

back to the Reich by the incorporation of Austria. Three and a half million Sudeten Germans must, in any circumstances, be restored to the Reich. But the Führer had given the assurance that, thereafter, no further territorial demands would arise in other spheres which could lead to a conflict between Germany and other countries. He, the British Prime Minister, had also understood the Führer to say that he was ready even to run the risk of a world war in order to secure the return of these 3½ million Sudeten Germans to the Reich. He did not want at the moment to make any further observations than that it must be possible for the Führer and for him to prevent a world war on account of these 3½ million Sudeten Germans.

He had furthermore understood the Führer to say that Czechoslovakia could not remain like a sort of spearhead aimed at Germany's side. If, then, the Sudeten Germans were to become once more part of the German Reich, would the remainder of Czechoslovakia be still regarded as a dangerous spearhead at Germany's side?

The Führer replied that this would be the case so long as the Czechoslovak State had alliances with other countries which made it a menace to Germany. Moreover, Czechoslovakia had already become a great expense to Germany, for she had made it necessary for Germany to form an air force of double the strength originally intended.

The British Prime Minister asked whether German objections regarding this rôle of Czechoslovakia would cease to exist if it were possible so to alter the relations between that country and Russia that, on the one hand, Czechoslovakia would be released from her obligations to Russia in the case of an attack on that country, and, on the other hand, if she (Czechoslovakia), like Belgium, no longer had the possibility of obtaining assistance from Russia or another country.

The Führer replied that Czechoslovakia would, in any case, cease to exist after a time; for, apart from the nationalities already referred to, the Slovaks were also trying with all their energy to detach themselves from that country.

The British Prime Minister referred to the fact that Great Britain was not herself interested in the Sudeten German question as such. That was an affair between Germans (or Sudeten Germans) and Czechs. Great Britain was only interested in the maintenance of peace.

The Führer here interpolated that peace had already ceased to exist in Czechoslovakia. For whole decades the German population of Czechoslovakia had been oppressed, and with the growth of the prestige and power of the German Reich it was gradually beginning to rebel against this oppression. The violent measures taken by Czechoslovakia, the shooting of Sudeten Germans, and the Czech attitude, which, from day to day, took more menacing forms, were certainly not calculated to remove the difficulties. On the contrary, hatred was thereby only increased.

The British Prime Minister continued that he, a practical man, had set himself the question how an eventual decision with regard to the inclusion of the Sudeten Germans in the Reich could be carried through in practice. The Sudeten Germans did not live in a compact area, but were fairly

scattered, and even if one were to hand over to Germany those areas in which 80 per cent. of the total population was German, there would always remain quite a number of inhabitants of the remainder of the Czechoslovak State who were of German origin. It was therefore not only a question of a new delimitation of frontiers, but, ultimately, also one of a transfer of certain parts of the population.

He (the Führer)<sup>16</sup> was, however, afraid that all these discussions were of a purely theoretical nature since the march of events was continuing at a rapid pace. Whole villages in these Sudeten areas had been evacuated. Ten thousand refugees were already on German soil. The number of dead and injured was enormous. It was clear that he could no longer look on inactive at these proceedings. At Nuremberg he had made his intentions clear, and it was a mistake to suppose that those had been but empty phrases.

He could under no circumstances look on inactive at these persecutions of Germans, and he was firmly determined to act.

The British Prime Minister then proposed to direct a common appeal to both parties in Czechoslovakia to make it possible for mutual conversations to be carried out in a quieter atmosphere. It was clear that, if the information which the Führer had received was correct, conditions in the Sudeten area were practically impossible. But experience often showed that the reports which appeared grave proved on closer examination to be less serious.

The Führer then replied that it was impossible for him to address an appeal of this kind to the Sudeten German population. He could not be expected to give the victims of Czechoslovak persecution reprimands<sup>17</sup> as well. One should also take into consideration the fact that the nervous tension of the inhabitants of the frontier districts had so increased as to be almost unbearable. From German territory could be heard the sound of artillery fire against defenceless Sudeten Germans. If Germany were to look on inactive, in all these circumstances, while old German towns such as Eger were attacked by the Czechs, this would in the long run be unbearable.

Moreover, one should also take the following facts into consideration. Germany had once, in 1918, taken a wrong step. But in the course of her 2,000 years of history she had always shown herself brave and heroic in action. And if Englishmen were just, they must admit that this was also the case in the course of the last Great War. Now Germans regarded the Czechs as cruel and inwardly cowards, and it was therefore not hard to imagine the feelings of the German population when they had to look on while their own countrymen were being oppressed by this inferior people. If he (the British Prime Minister) would imagine an England enslaved by a people of this kind, his blood would surely rise just as that of the Germans did in the case of Czechoslovakia.

After the Führer had once more emphatically rejected the idea of an appeal to the two parties, the British Prime Minister declared that he was now willing

<sup>16</sup> The words in parentheses do not appear in the German original, where a passage appears to have been omitted. Cf. Mr. Chamberlain's own notes in No. 895.

<sup>17</sup> This should read: 'admonitions'.

to drop this proposal, but that he must ask why the Führer had let him come to Germany when he (the Führer) was apparently determined to proceed in one quite definite direction and would not consider the idea of an armistice.

The Führer replied that he thought it necessary to-day or to-morrow to go into the question whether a peaceful settlement of the question was possible at all. He must, however, emphasise once more that he was firmly determined, in any circumstances, to bring this question to a decision by one means or another in the shortest possible time.

Moreover, he observed that Czechoslovakia had made use of the British Prime Minister's journey to bring about a mobilisation and to call up ten classes of reservists.

The British Prime Minister then repeated that, when it was a question of saving human life, all chances of a peaceful settlement must be explored to the very last. He therefore repeated his proposal to bring about a kind of armistice, and added that he was prepared to consider a pause of this nature narrowly limited in point of time.

The Führer replied that an immediate appeasement in the Sudeten area could only be brought about if the Czech State Police were withdrawn and the troops confined to barracks. It further seemed to him important, in answer to the question about the further continuation of the conversations, what attitude Great Britain took up with regard to the Sudeten area. Did England, or did she not, wish<sup>18</sup> for the separation of these districts and a change in the present constitution of Czechoslovakia? If England could agree to a process<sup>19</sup> of this kind, and if this could be announced to the world as a basic decision of principle, this would no doubt lead to a great degree of appeasement in the districts in question. The question was therefore to know whether Great Britain was now prepared to agree to a separation of the Sudeten German districts on the basis of the right of national self-determination. In this connexion he (the Führer) must observe that this right of self-determination had not been specially invented in the year 1938 for the Czechoslovak question, but had already been called to life in the year 1918 in order to create a moral basis for the changes undertaken by<sup>20</sup> the Treaty of Versailles. On this basis the conversations could continue, but the British Prime Minister must first of all state whether he could or could not accept this basis, i.e., a separation of the Sudeten areas on the basis of the right of self-determination.

The British Prime Minister expressed his satisfaction that the root of the question had now at last been reached. He was not in a position to make categorical statements for the whole British Government. Moreover, he must naturally also consult France and Lord Runciman. But he could give it as his personal view that, now that he had heard the Führer's motives, and now that he saw the whole situation in a clear<sup>21</sup> light, he was ready to ascertain

<sup>18</sup> This should read: 'Would England agree, or not, to the separation . . . ?'

<sup>19</sup> This should read: 'to a severance of this kind . . . ?'

<sup>20</sup> This should read: 'resulting from the Treaty of Versailles'.

<sup>21</sup> This should read: 'clearer'.

whether his personal opinion was also shared by his colleagues. He could state personally that he admitted the principle of the separation of the Sudeten areas. The difficulty appeared to him to lie in the practical execution of these principles. He wished, therefore, to return to England in order to report to the Government and to obtain their approval of his personal attitude. At the same time he proposed that clarity should be reached on both sides in their own minds, about the practical method of execution of this principle, for there were a whole number of problems of organisation and administration involved.

The Führer declared that he would gladly save the British Prime Minister a second journey to Germany, for he was much younger and could undertake a journey of that kind; but he was afraid that were he to come to England anti-German demonstrations would complicate rather than simplify the situation. But in order somewhat to shorten the Prime Minister's journey he proposed for their next meeting the Lower Rhine area, Cologne or Godesberg.

The British Prime Minister then asked the Führer what would happen in the meanwhile, and whether it was not possible to take measures to prevent a further deterioration of the situation.

The Führer replied that there did, of course, exist dangers of such a deterioration, with the result that the great military machine which Germany had built up would have to be set in motion. But once this machine was in motion it would no longer be possible to stop it. If major incidents, frontier violations and events of that kind were to take place, the danger would increase to the most extreme degree.

But even at the risk that this would be represented as weakness, as perhaps the British press would represent it, he was ready to give an assurance that in the course of the next few days, if at all possible, he would not give the order to set the military machine in action, unless a completely impossible situation were to arise. In that case, of course, all further conversations would be useless as well.

It was clear that everyone in Germany would be glad when the inevitable and essential result above referred to of the inclusion of the Sudeten Germans in the Reich could be brought about in a peaceful manner. He (the Führer) would be particularly happy if, in connexion therewith, an improvement of Anglo-German relations could be brought about. The attitude of England and France had been<sup>22</sup> incomprehensible to him. While England had given the Irish their freedom without a war, and while the French, in spite of possible economic and military objectives, had allowed the Saar to be returned to Germany, there was talk in both countries of warlike developments in an affair which was to them after all by no means a direct interest. France had allowed a plebiscite to take place in the Saar, but when a plebiscite was to take place in the Sudeten area, was she ready to go to war with Germany, a war which would naturally be a question of life and death? That attitude was to him completely incomprehensible.

The British Prime Minister declared that Great Britain had on her part

<sup>22</sup> This should read: 'was'.

never taken up an attitude of this kind, but had only sought a just and peaceful solution. Great Britain was prepared to admit certain principles, and was only concerned with the practical exclusion<sup>23</sup> of these principles. He asked the Führer once more how order could be preserved in the political situation in the few days necessary for the deliberations of the British Cabinet.

The Führer replied that the British Government could bring Czechoslovakia to stop her mobilisation measures. These measures might lead to a second 21st May, and in that case a very serious situation would arise.

The British Prime Minister replied that he understood from the Führer's words that both he and the Führer wished to do everything in their power in order to keep the political situation as quiet as possible during the days in question. The Führer had stated that he could do little with things as they were. But he hoped nevertheless that he would do what lay in his power in order to keep developments in peaceful channels, and he could say, on his part, that he would make every possible endeavour on his side in that direction.

The Führer declared that he also would do everything, but could not issue a public proclamation.

Finally, the following short press communiqué about the conversations was agreed upon:—

'The Führer and Chancellor of the Reich held a conversation to-day at Obersalzberg with the British Prime Minister, in the course of which a comprehensive and frank exchange of views took place about the present situation. The British Prime Minister returns to England to-morrow in order to consult the British Cabinet. In the course of a few days a further conversation will take place.'

September 15, 1938.

<sup>23</sup> This should read: 'execution'.

## No. 897

*Notes by Sir Horace Wilson on conversations during Mr. Chamberlain's visit to Berchtesgaden*

[C 10240/1941/18]

I travelled to Munich this morning by car with Von Dircksen [*sic*], the German Ambassador in London, in two hours. He had not seen the Führer after yesterday's conversation between the Prime Minister and Hitler, but he had seen Von Ribbentrop, Weizsäcker, Hewel and others who had been present at a conference with Hitler after we had gone. Von Dircksen told me that the opinion of all of them was that Hitler had obviously been impressed by the Prime Minister and had felt that he, the Prime Minister, understood Hitler and that, in turn, Hitler had appreciated the Prime Minister—especially the directness with which he had talked and the rapidity with which he had grasped the essentials of the situation. Von Dircksen said that he himself was satisfied that the visit had been most valuable. He added that it could not have been better timed or done in a better way. They all seem

to be impressed by the 'statesmanship' of what they evidently regard as a bold master-stroke in diplomacy. It had clearly appealed to Hitler as something after his own heart, and his subsequent long conversation with the Prime Minister had done nothing to lessen its effect.

I told Von Dirksen that although we should go into action as soon as we got home (e.g. the Prime Minister would see some of his more important colleagues this evening and also Lord Runciman, who had been asked to come back for the purpose) there were a good many things to be done—in England, in Paris, and at Prague—and that inevitably this must take a few days. It was essential that nothing should happen to interfere with what we were doing. I said the Prime Minister had asked Lord Runciman last night, when announcing his visit to London, to urge both parties in Czechoslovakia to take no action that would lead to incidents pending the conversations. We would do all we could to reinforce this. The German Chancellor had given the Prime Minister to understand that he, for his part, would do what he could. (The Prime Minister had in the meantime given Von Ribbentrop for delivery to Hitler the letter—copy attached<sup>1</sup>—hinting that we expected him to help.) I pointed out to Von Dirksen that English opinion—impressed by the Prime Minister's action in going to Germany—would universally condemn any movement by Germany that cut across the next stage, and I urged him to use his influence to see that nothing of the kind happened. He agreed to do so, adding that he did not think Hitler would want so to act. 'Hitler feels he is in serious conversation with the Prime Minister.'

I introduced Göring's name at this point as I had told Henderson to get into touch at once with Göring and use the same language to him. Von Dirksen said that Göring—who has been really ill but is recovering and able to do some work—was a moderating influence.

Von Dirksen then turned to the question *how* to apply self-determination. He seemed to take it for granted that self-determination was the only way out and gave me the impression that Hitler had given instructions for ways and means to be worked out. The German Foreign Office, he said, had been considering questions such as the local government areas to be taken for voting purposes, what to do about boundaries, who should vote, etc. The fact that the German delegation yesterday (a very large one completely outnumbering our modest four) included Gaus, their legal adviser, who has been busily engaged on this matter, seems to suggest that they thought the discussions might get down to such practical matters.

Von Dirksen said he recognised that many questions would have to be considered, and that this would take time. He agreed that the right conditions must exist locally, both for the preparation of a scheme and for the taking of the plebiscite. He thought that unless the tension relaxed very considerably as a result of the decision in principle (it interested me to note how far the impression had gone that all that mattered was the Prime Minister's personal intimation to the world at large that that was the way out!) it would be necessary to consider an international police force in the Sudeten German

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix to this Document.

areas to replace the Czech State Police. (The latter, he said, after enquiry of a German Foreign Office official, numbered 30,000 or more.) As regards the attitude of France, Von Dircksen said he did not think they could oppose the principle of self-determination. When I suggested that we might have a little trouble with the French, who would in any case take care to blame us, he said it could not be helped and that 'anyhow, the decision rested in that car', pointing to the Prime Minister's car just in front of us.

During a halt in the journey to Munich I had a short conversation this morning with Weizsäcker, who had talked very freely to me throughout the visit. He had an hour with the Führer after yesterday's conversation. He said the Prime Minister had made just the right impression on Hitler and that the conversation with the Prime Minister had been most satisfactory. (Before it took place he said to me 'This visit *must* succeed' and no pencil point, least of all the one with which I now write, would stand the strain necessary to reproduce the emphasis he laid on the word 'must'.) I spoke to Weizsäcker on the lines of my talk with Von Dircksen as to the need to see that neither Hitler nor anybody else did anything to upset the Prime Minister's further efforts. He acknowledged the importance of this. I got the impression that he was not afraid of it happening. He, of course, realised, as everyone must, that an outbreak in Czechoslovakia might be too much for Hitler, but he assured me that the Prime Minister had made such an impression upon the Chancellor that the latter would hesitate.

Hewel (Von Ribbentrop's personal secretary), who seems to spend a good deal of his time at Berchtesgaden and to have ready access to Hitler, spoke to me this morning of his impressions of a conversation he had with Hitler last night. He confirmed what the others had said, adding 'Hitler told me he felt he was speaking to a *man*'. He added, what I had heard from Weizsäcker and Von Ribbentrop, that when Hitler received the Prime Minister's message on Wednesday morning his first remark was 'Oh, I can't let him come all this way; I will fly to meet him in England', and it was a matter of regret to him to have to abandon the idea.

Schmidt, the interpreter, who is probably a good judge of Hitler, said 'What impressed Hitler most was Mr. Chamberlain's directness and clarity of thought and speech; he likes that.'

At the luncheon at Munich today I sat next to Von Ribbentrop. It is perhaps characteristic of him that neither to me nor (as I afterwards ascertained) to the Prime Minister throughout a two-hours' ride did he say anything about the favourable view Hitler had formed of the Prime Minister and of the conversation. I took up with him the question of giving the Prime Minister a fair chance to tackle the rest of his job. He was not in his best mood, so I told him that while very many Englishmen knew little about Czechoslovakia they knew a good deal about the Prime Minister and would be united in resenting it if anything were done by Germany between the two conversations to wreck the Prime Minister's chances. He made the usual remark about incidents in Czechoslovakia. This enabled me to refer to the story given to us at Berchtesgaden (after the Prime Minister had gone in



with Hitler for their private conversation) about 300 Germans having been killed at Eger the previous evening. I told Von Ribbentrop that as soon as I heard this (before 6 p.m.) I had asked his private secretary to telephone to Berlin for a statement of the facts. Up to the time we left (8.15 p.m.) I had been given no reply, though I had several times asked for it. When we returned to the hotel we had telephoned to the Runciman Mission for the truth. Their answer was 'Nonsense. There were no casualties yesterday. Since we have been here there have been only 28 casualties—including Germans and Czechs'. Von Ribbentrop made no comment on this. Whereupon I said it would be well if everybody concerned would remember that it is a good rule to have the facts before deciding action.

In view of Von Ribbentrop's attitude and of other remarks that he made, I impressed upon Sir N. Henderson the importance of getting in touch with Göring as soon as he could possibly manage to do so.

H. J. W.

*Somewhere above Germany*

*16th September, 1938*

APPENDIX TO No. 897

My dear Chancellor,

GRAND HOTEL, BERCHTESGADEN, *16th September, 1938*

I am just on the point of leaving for London and shall ask Herr von Ribbentrop to be good enough to bring this message to you. I have arranged to consult my colleagues as soon as I can on my return and shall report to them our conversation. I hope also to be able to persuade Lord Runciman to return to London for a short time to give us his views.

In the meantime I have asked Lord Runciman to appeal to both sides in Czechoslovakia to refrain from any action which would be likely to lead to further incidents pending the resumption of the conversations between Your Excellency and myself. I feel sure that you will appreciate the importance of this and that you will be willing to use your influence in the same direction.

Meanwhile I should like to express my pleasure at having established personal contact with your Excellency and to thank you for your courtesies during my brief stay at Berchtesgaden.

Yours faithfully,

NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN

No. 898

*United Kingdom Delegation (Geneva) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 16, 9.30 a.m.)*

*No. 32 Telegraphic [C 9953/5302/18]*

Your telegram No. 38.<sup>1</sup>

GENEVA, *September 15, 1938, 10.50 p.m.*

Following from Lord de la Warr:

I saw Foreign Minister of Roumania this afternoon. I discussed with him

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram of September 14 referred to a report in 'The Times' that an exchange of views had taken place between the Russian and Roumanian delegations, in which it was agreed that in the case of an aggression against Czechoslovakia, neither country would remain neutral.

report for which you wished confirmation. He gave me to understand there was no definite agreement between Russia and Roumania but that, in case of war, supplies would probably pass through Roumania to Czechoslovakia and he thought there would be no difficulty in such a case in allowing transit, especially for aeroplanes. He stressed immense geographical difficulties which stood in the way of easy transit of men and materials across Northern Roumania. There were no convenient railways; a single line railway entailed some 500 miles of devious route to borders of Czechoslovakia.

2. It was clear from our conversation that Roumanian Government were very friendly disposed towards His Majesty's Government while they were equally afraid of Germany. At one point in the conversation Minister for Foreign Affairs stated that if Czechoslovakia collapsed now it would be Poland's turn next and then that of Roumania. But while commitments of Roumania towards Czechoslovakia were so definite he made it clear Roumania would find it hard to march alone; her policy was bound up with policies of Yugoslavia and Poland. The former would be likely to follow lead of Roumania while Roumania would be influenced by attitude of Poland. Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs went out of his way to emphasise that Polish help was the key to the whole situation in Eastern Europe. Russia's natural line of communication with Czechoslovakia lay through Poland and if the latter was willing to allow Russian aid to pass through her territory Roumania could then march and if she did so, so could Yugoslavia.

3. In this connexion he said he was expecting further news indicating new tendencies in Polish policy contrary to influence of M. Beck, but he said this influence was still very strong. He would pass on any further news that he received from Poland. Such a change of policy could be accelerated if United Kingdom found it possible to develop more cordial relations with Poland and especially help her towards a solution of her Jewish problem.

4. Throughout the interview Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs indicated no particular attachment to Russia but rather the reverse saying that throughout history, whenever there had been association with Russia that country had managed to secure large portions of Roumanian territory for herself.

5. Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs said he had seen M. Herriot during his recent visit to Geneva. The latter had been disappointed by reports he had received of a recent conversation between French Ambassador and yourself. He had hoped British attitude in case of conflict in Central Europe would be more definite than had been indicated in this interview. I replied along the line on which we have agreed that if France was brought into the struggle we should almost inevitably be drawn in. Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs seemed perfectly to understand and appreciate our attitude.

No. 899

*Sir N. Charles (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 16, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 581 Telegraphic [C 9890/1941/18]*

ROME, September 16, 1938, 1.30 a.m.

Czechoslovakia.

The Military Attaché paid a visit this morning to German Assistant Military Attaché who is acting, in absence through illness of German Military Attaché.

Military Attaché told Assistant Military Attaché that he had chosen today to visit him because Mr. Chamberlain was visiting Herr Hitler and he hoped that their interview might form basis of future peace of Europe and a permanent understanding between our two countries.

Assistant Military Attaché who was evidently in a considerable state of nerves replied that whole staff of German Embassy had heaved a deep sigh of relief when they heard the news of Mr. Chamberlain's visit. He considered that the Prime Minister's action was beyond praise and was proof of a courage which would appeal both to Herr Hitler and German people.

Assistant Military Attaché averred that he knew little of rights and wrongs of the Sudeten question but he was certain that he was expressing the views of whole German army when he said that last thing in the world they wanted was war and particularly war with Great Britain. He personally had been so worried that he had not slept for two nights.

Military Attaché turned conversation to subject of Italian army and, as he has done before, German Assistant Military Attaché expressed profoundest contempt for it and Italians in general.

Yesterday Military Attaché called on Liaison Officer of Italian War Ministry who received him in a considerable state of excitement and expressed himself as appalled at turn events were taking. He said Italy was little interested in the Sudeten question and only wanted peace.

Czechoslovak Military Attaché visited Military Attaché this morning to express his delight at the Prime Minister's 'magnificent action on behalf of European peace'. Though apprehensive lest dismemberment of his country might be the result he was of opinion that Czechs would accept whatever terms Mr. Chamberlain eventually advocated.

Repeated to Prague and to Prime Minister at Berchtesgaden.

No. 900

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 16, 5.45 p.m.)*  
*No. 602 Telegraphic [C 9949/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 16, 1938, 2.0 p.m.

The growing list of Czech casualties and stories of murders of their gendarmes brought from Sudeten areas by Czech refugees many of whom have

been members of chauvinist Czech frontier associations (Narodni Jednota) may obviously produce serious effects on Czech population in very near future. A high official in Ministry of Foreign Affairs who himself holds moderate views told me last night that although Czech population has shown great restraint, once limit of their patience has been exceeded situation would indeed be ugly and it would not be easy to restore control. From many sources I hear of growing anxiety that Czech population will soon either get out of hand or force Government to take stronger measures against rebellious Sudeten Germans.<sup>1</sup>

Since foregoing was drafted Military Attaché has informed me of a conversation with Head of French military mission who has served with mission for nearly twenty years, speaks Czech and probably knows as much of Czech mentality as any foreigner. General Faucher discussed reactions of army in face of two eventualities: (1) A German invasion and (2) the 'abandonment' of Czechoslovakia by her allies and friends by which he meant proposal for a plebiscite or for cession of Sudeten areas by any other means. In former case he was convinced army would fight to last man provided foreign assistance was forthcoming; he did not discuss its attitude in the event of no foreign assistance being forthcoming. In second case envisaged he was convinced immediate reaction would be widespread massacres of Sudeten population, the overthrow of any Government that contemplated surrender, and a wave of xenophobia directed particularly against Great Britain as the country primarily responsible for leading Czechoslovakia to her ruin.

Similar views have been expressed to Military Attaché by other persons whose opinion cannot be lightly disregarded.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Newton had previously reported (telegram No. 599) (i) that, according to a semi-official statement, the Government had decided to proceed against Herr Henlein because, on September 15, he had issued two proclamations to the Sudeten German population over the German wireless, and (ii) that 'Herr Henlein left this country for Germany on Tuesday (September 13) and I have not yet heard of his return'.

#### No. 901

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 16, 4.35 p.m.)

No. 455 *Telegraphic: by telephone [C 9945/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 16, 1938

I am informed by United States Embassy that Czechoslovak Consular officers in Vienna and Stuttgart have on instructions from their Governments requested their United States colleagues to protect their interests. Request has been referred to Washington.

No approach has yet been made by Czechoslovak Legation here.

Repeated to Prague.

No. 902

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 16, 9.30 p.m.)  
No. 605 Telegraphic [C 9955/1941/18]

PRAGUE, September 16, 1938, 6.40 p.m.

My telegram No. 584.<sup>1</sup>

From a different but highly placed source<sup>2</sup> a hint has reached me that if some territorial secession is absolutely insisted upon as a *sine qua non* of a peaceful solution by Herr Hitler it might in the last resort be feasible to surrender Egerland and other areas referred to in last paragraph of my telegram under reference. Opposition would be very strong but might not be insuperable as by many Czechs inclusion of these areas at the peace conference had hardly been expected and the exclusion would not seriously endanger and could in fact strengthen frontier. The areas could be drawn to include from 800,000 up to perhaps even a 1,000,000 inhabitants, in vast majority Germans. Their surrender should therefore afford considerable satisfaction for the *amour propre* of the Reich.

As regards rest of Sudeten Germans in the areas which could not be amputated without mutilating the State and destroying its natural, geographical, economic and strategic unity, self-determination could be granted within the present State by means of Government's last offer which had after all been accepted as a basis by Sudeten party. A conceivable alternative might be a federal division under which defence, foreign affairs and major economic matters were reserved for Central Government.

If the country had to fight, attacked from Germany, such a war would in my informant's opinion be accompanied by internal massacres on a large scale ('Massenmorde').

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 888.

<sup>2</sup> In an immediately following telegram Mr. Newton reported: 'Hint was given to me by Dr. Hodza who did not wish me to quote him and emphasised that he was only thinking aloud. He thought that the country which prays for peace could be persuaded to stand such an idea though there might have to be a change of government before it could be put through.'

No. 903

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax  
(Received September 17, 9.30 a.m.)  
No. 459 Telegraphic [C 9986/1941/18]

BERLIN, September 16, 1938, 9.29 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

While I shall do as I have done for past three months utmost that I can

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. In this telegram of September 16 Sir N. Henderson reported that he had arranged to visit Field-Marshal Göring at Karinhall at 11 a.m. on Saturday, September 17, and that he would 'impress upon him as forcibly as I can the absolute importance of now awaiting calmly the next meeting with the Prime Minister and of restraining the German press from exaggeration and incitation'.

through all channels open to me to convince Germans of folly of forcible intervention prior to next meeting between Prime Minister and Chancellor I must point out that the latter is on top of his mountain, that his chief source of information appears to be preposterous stories of German newspapers and that Herr von Ribbentrop remains down there in attendance.

It seems to be therefore essential that concurrence of British Government and French Government and of Lord Runciman in principle of secession of Sudetens should be obtained and made known as soon as possible and that French Government should definitely notify Czechoslovak Government that the latter cannot count on French support if they decide to go to war rather than accept such a solution.

I am disinclined to believe that Herr Hitler will be so unwise as to seek for trouble just when he is on the point of obtaining his object without war. What I mainly fear at the moment is that despair on the part of the Czechs will drive the latter to such violence as may in Herr Hitler's eyes justify him in going back on his assurance to the Prime Minister not to resort to extremes if he can help it.

Might not it also help if once the principle is agreed upon Signor Mussolini were so notified and his moderating influence on Germany solicited?

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

#### No. 904

*Note from the French Ambassador to Viscount Halifax*

[C 9965/1941/18]

No. 490.

LONDRES, le 16 septembre 1938

Monsieur le Secrétaire d'État,

J'ai été chargé par mon Gouvernement de marquer à Votre Excellence que le Gouvernement français mesure toute la portée du geste accompli par Monsieur le Premier Ministre en se rendant auprès du Chancelier Hitler et en engageant ainsi avec autant de noblesse et de hauteur de vues que de décision toute son autorité morale et sa responsabilité publique au service de la paix. L'opinion française a été heureuse de voir dans cette entreprise exceptionnelle une manifestation de la solidarité qui, au cours de la crise actuelle, n'a cessé d'unir les Gouvernements britannique et français, et dont la pratique constante demeure plus que jamais nécessaire.

Le Gouvernement français, qui sait que ces sentiments sont également ceux de Monsieur Neville Chamberlain, lui fait pleinement confiance dans la grande tâche qu'il a entreprise et qui vise à rechercher la procédure la mieux capable d'assurer un règlement amiable des problèmes actuels en conciliant la sauvegarde des intérêts vitaux de l'État tchécoslovaque avec le souci primordial du maintien de la paix européenne.

Le concours du Gouvernement français est acquis d'avance au Gouvernement britannique en vue de toute action complémentaire qui paraîtrait

susceptible de faciliter le succès final des efforts communs des deux Gouvernements.

Veuillez agréer les assurances de la haute considération avec laquelle j'ai l'honneur d'être,

Monsieur le Secrétaire d'État, etc.,  
CH. CORBIN

No. 905

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 17, 11.30 a.m.)

No. 463 *Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10045/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 17, 1938

Public opinion, whilst still extremely anxious for peace, is gradually being 'hotted up' by propaganda against the Czechs. There is general hope and belief that Mr. Chamberlain will find a way out; but if war comes in the end the public will be brought to believe that it is due to Czech rather than German intransigence.

His Majesty's Consul at Dresden reports considerable anti-Czech feeling in the frontier districts. He is officially informed that the number of refugees in Saxony is now 13,000 but that the stream is diminishing.

Repeated to Prague and Paris Saving.

No. 906

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 17, 11.55 a.m.)

No. 460 *Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10042/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 17, 1938

Prague telegram No. 605.<sup>1</sup>

It is my duty earnestly to warn you that no discussion of half measures at this stage will serve any purpose whatsoever but merely encourage Herr Hitler to throw discretion, if he has any left, to the winds. Some form of compromise might be discussed with the Germans later but at the moment the essential need is to reach an agreement between Lord Runciman and the British and French Governments on the acceptance or not of the principle of self-determination and secession.

Can any doubt exist any longer as to the facts of the case?

There can be no peace in Europe so long as Germans living on the borders of the Reich in territories where they are in a majority remain subjected to the Czechoslovak Government. Incorporation of Egerland would merely fan and keep perpetually burning the flames in districts not so incorporated.

<sup>1</sup> No. 902.

If the British and French Governments do not agree to the principle of incorporation of the German areas in the Reich, it is absolutely certain that Germany will act by herself and we must then be prepared for a general European war which alone can prevent her achieving her aims by force. If Germany acts on her own the independence of the Czechs themselves is at stake and we shall be waging war for a cause in which much doubt at least must be felt as to its moral rightness.

Alternatively if we do accept the principle of secession we must be prepared to coerce the Czechoslovak Government or leave her to her fate. The prospect is inconceivably repugnant but facts have to be faced and the moral principle is at least one which we can invoke in other disputes to infinite benefit of mankind.

In any case the *method*<sup>2</sup> of solution can now only be settled together with the German Government and not apart from them and danger of irremediable incident increases daily so long as the question of *principle*<sup>2</sup> remains undecided.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>2</sup> This word is underlined in the original.

#### No. 907

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 17, 12.5 p.m.)*  
*No. 254 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10059/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 17, 1938

From quarters close to M. Daladier I understand that there is considerable heart-burning that French Government have not yet been given any indication by His Majesty's Government of what occurred at Berchtesgaden and that M. Daladier is extremely anxious that he, or he and M. Bonnet, should be invited to London for information and consultation.<sup>1</sup> He is ready to go at any moment. I understand also that he feels that conversations would be more constructive if he might be informed before leaving Paris of the gist of what has passed. Otherwise he might be obliged to return to Paris to consult his Ministers before taking any decision. For M. Bonnet's personal position it would be most desirable that he should also be invited. He, more than certain other French Ministers, realises the weakness of France owing to lamentable condition of her air force.

The whole press this morning expresses the hope for an early meeting in London, which they feel is essential as the next step.

<sup>1</sup> Captain D. Euan Wallace, Financial Secretary to the Treasury and a member of the British Delegation to the meeting of the Assembly of the League of Nations, telegraphed to Lord Halifax at 12.45 p.m. information in similar terms.



No. 908

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*  
*No. 280 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10059/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 17, 1938, 1.45 p.m.

Your telegram No. 254.<sup>1</sup>

His Majesty's Government would be very glad if President of Council and Minister for Foreign Affairs could come immediately to London for discussion.

Prime Minister and I would be at their disposal at any time from this evening onward.

<sup>1</sup> No. 907.

No. 909

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 17, 2.50 p.m.)*  
*No. 255 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10060/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 17, 1938

Your telegram No. 280.<sup>1</sup>

I have telephoned your invitation to M. Bonnet at Rambouillet, where he is with the President of the Republic.

He will give me the reply of himself and M. Daladier as soon as possible.

<sup>1</sup> No. 908.

No. 910

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 17, 6.50 p.m.)*  
*No. 464 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10046/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 17, 1938

I motored to Karinhall this morning to speak with Field-Marshal Göring. He is still unwell and I found him studying Herr Schmidt's record<sup>1</sup> of conversations between the Prime Minister and Herr Hitler. Our conversation lasted over an hour; was very outspoken on both sides.

I told him I had lost no time in coming to see him on my return from Berchtesgaden because I had confidence in him and because what I most feared now was precipitate action on the part of Germany which would ruin entirely effect of Prime Minister's gallant journey to Berchtesgaden in quest of peace. I was additionally nervous because Herr Hitler was alone on his mountain with only Ribbentrop, who was a mere 'yes-man', to advise him and supply exaggerated reports of German newspapers as his chief source of information.

<sup>1</sup> No. 896.

If the Prime Minister's effort was to be ruined by any unwise or hasty action by Germany, exasperation of British public would be such as to destroy the last hope of peace. I fully realized that there might be great provocation on the Czech side in the next few days, but even so Germany must hold her hand and keep a cool head, etc., etc.

Field-Marshal Göring's reply was that there was no need for undue anxiety, Herr Hitler had given his word and it could be absolutely relied upon. Unless something catastrophic occurred, Germany would be patient at any rate until the next meeting took place. He shared my opinion of Ribbentrop (he undertook to respect my confidence in this respect) and had himself given him a severe talking to at Nuremberg. Even if he (Field-Marshal Göring) was not at Berchtesgaden his man of confidence General Bodenschatz was there in his absence. The Führer trusted the latter who had come to report yesterday evening and whom he had sent back to Berchtesgaden this morning. I asked what Field-Marshal Göring meant by 'catastrophic'. He said nothing less than a military revolution, overthrow of present government, deliberate massacre of one hundred Sudetens (not ten Sudetens) . . .<sup>2</sup> or deliberate bombardment of German posts across the frontier (not just a few shots) or upon refugees who were flocking into Germany. He repeated his definite and categorical assurances in this respect several times, always repeating the word 'catastrophic'. At the same time he told me equally definitely that no other solution except self-determination was now possible. If British and French Governments accepted this principle, the German Government was prepared to discuss methods of execution, but it would be absolutely futile to put forward any new plan which fell short of that principle (even without General [*sic*] Göring(? 's confirmation))<sup>2</sup> I am positively convinced of this and would regard as fraught with disaster an attempt to hold another meeting on any other basis).

According to General [*sic*] Göring there were now only two possible alternatives (a) if British and French Governments accepted self-determination, for them to coerce Czechoslovak Government into acquiescence or (b) if they failed to do this to allow Germany to do so. He was fully alive to probability that Czechoslovak Government would still prefer to fight in belief that England, France and Russia would in the end come to their assistance. M. Benes was in his opinion gambling 'banco'. But it was (? intolerable that)<sup>2</sup> peace of whole world should be endangered because Czechs were prepared to fight for maintenance of a situation which had become quite impossible and never could be maintained permanently. He similarly believes Hitler was not bluffing when he said he was prepared to risk a general war rather than leave Sudetens any longer to their present fate. Every day that Germany delayed action was a concession to Great Britain since it meant more Sudetens killed and greater Czech military preparedness which might end in more German soldiers being killed. But Hitler would keep his word and do nothing before next meeting unless circumstances . . .<sup>2</sup> alert he was.

Contrary to his usual habit General [*sic*] Göring was deliberate and restrained

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

in his language. He indulged in no anti-Czech fulminations and I am convinced that he was speaking as sincerely as frankly.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

#### No. 911

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 17, 7.10 p.m.)

*No. 466 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10018/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 17, 1938

Field-Marshal Göring spoke in very admiring and respectful manner this morning of Prime Minister. His language was undoubtedly based on impression created on Herr Hitler. 'Neither England nor Germany' he said 'could afford to allow Prime Minister's gesture in flying to Berchtesgaden to remain without results.'

#### No. 912

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 17, 7.10 p.m.)

*No. 470 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10050/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 17, 1938

. . .<sup>1</sup> Field-Marshal Göring mentioned that Germany was prepared to shelve political aspect of Czech problem until after settlement of racial question.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.

#### No. 913

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 17, 7.50 p.m.)*

*No. 621 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10005/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 17, 1938

My telegram No. 584<sup>1</sup> last paragraph and my telegram No. 605.<sup>2</sup>

In conversation with Military Attaché today important official of the General Staff speaking personally and very confidentially but in presence of a fellow officer, said he thought there would be no great objection to the cession of Egerland and one or two of the small districts which are not regarded as part of historical Bohemia and of strategical value.

While strong protests may be made, in his personal view there would be

<sup>1</sup> No. 888.

<sup>2</sup> No. 902.

no serious opposition to giving them up either in the army or the country. He added that there is afterthought that Czechoslovakia would be well rid of such districts.

Please inform the War Office.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

No. 914

*United Kingdom Delegation (Geneva) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 18,<sup>1</sup> 9.35 p.m.)

No. 37 Telegraphic [C 10096/1941/18]

GENEVA, September 17, 1938, 8.0 p.m.

Following from Wallace.<sup>2</sup>

Following is substance of notes taken from a document written by M. Massigli shown to us confidentially for perusal by French Delegation.

In the event of German attack on Czechoslovakia, France would be bound to go to her assistance but could decide for herself whether to do so at once or to invoke the Council under Article 11 and await pronouncement that aggression had occurred.

After discussing pros and cons document concludes that it would be advantageous to France to receive from the Council a finding that aggression had occurred. Reasons given are:

1. British assistance would not be assured to France unless United Kingdom recognised that French action in assisting Czechoslovakia was not contrary to Locarno. Unless previously assured of British assistance, a meeting of the Council would be necessary to France in order that she may not be exposed by [*sic*, ? to] United Kingdom evading her obligations to France.

2. A finding of aggression by the Council would facilitate the position of other States e.g. United Kingdom *vis-à-vis* the Dominions, Russia *vis-à-vis* Roumania, regarding passage of troops and aeroplanes. It would not assure any assistance to Czechoslovakia on the part of the States other than France and Russia but would facilitate measures by any members of the League willing to take them.

3. On the other hand the absence of any finding of aggression would facilitate the position of those members who were not willing to give any assistance.

Full notes follow by bag.<sup>3</sup>

For comments see my immediately following telegram.<sup>4</sup>

Repeated to Paris.

<sup>1</sup> Apparently an error for September 17.

<sup>3</sup> Not printed.

<sup>2</sup> See No. 907, note 1.

<sup>4</sup> No. 915.

No. 915

*United Kingdom Delegation (Geneva) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 17, 10.15 p.m.)  
No. 38 Telegraphic [C 10097/1941/18]

GENEVA, September 17, 1938, 8.0 p.m.

Following from Wallace.

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

References to Locarno are difficult to understand. They seem to indicate that French consider that the United Kingdom objection<sup>2</sup> would arise if France attacked Germany in consequence of a German attack on Czechoslovakia and if in consequence French . . . attacked Germany . . .<sup>3</sup> by an attack on France. I understand however from Legal Adviser to Delegation that United Kingdom obligation should arise only if Germany made a direct attack on France without awaiting previous French attack. This is unlikely to occur and references to Locarno and United Kingdom obligations appear therefore largely irrelevant.

On the other hand there is much to be said for French view that if emergency arose a finding of aggression by Council would facilitate taking of action by those countries who were prepared to do so and in the circumstances . . .<sup>4</sup> would have a considerable moral effect with favourable repercussions on public opinion throughout the world.

French . . .<sup>4</sup> invocation of Article 11 whereas the technically correct article would seem to be Article 17, at any rate if it is desired to secure theoretical application of Article 16 to situation.

Further comments by bag.<sup>5</sup>

Repeated to Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 914.

<sup>2</sup> This word appears to be an error for 'obligations'.

<sup>3</sup> The text is here uncertain: from pencil emendation it would appear to read 'if in consequence of French attack, Germany retaliated by an attack on France'.

<sup>4</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>5</sup> Not printed.

No. 916

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax* (Received September 18, 8.30 a.m.)  
No. 623 Telegraphic [C 10006/1941/18]

PRAGUE, September 17, 1938, 8.35 p.m.

Your telegram No. 227.<sup>1</sup>

I have received report from Major Sutton-Pratt (copy of which goes by air mail in my despatch No. 324<sup>2</sup> September 17) drawing attention to German wireless bulletins. These are now being given out several times a day and describe the situation in Sudeten areas as amounting to reign of terror. Bulletins as Major Sutton-Pratt can confirm from his direct observations bear

<sup>1</sup> No. 641.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed.

no relation to the facts but are closely followed by Sudetens whose passions are thereby being inflamed against the Czechs.

Perhaps it could usefully be suggested to the German Government that if they sincerely desire peace they should desist from this campaign. Incidentally it must be very prejudicial to the German cause with well informed opinion throughout the world.

I have also considered the question of publishing these reports and after discussion with Major Sutton-Pratt I have come to the conclusion that the disadvantages outweigh the advantages for the following reasons:

1. Reports themselves would not reach or convince Sudeten Germans and German public.

2. On the other hand Sudetens would quickly become aware that the reports were unfavourable to them with the result that activities of observers would be prejudiced and even their lives imperilled in certain areas.

These objections would not apply with the same force to informing Herr Hitler in confidence and orally of general effect of Major Sutton-Pratt's careful and unbiased observations and enquiries.

Repeated to Berlin.

#### No. 917

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received September 17, 10.35 p.m.)*

*No. 471 Telegraphic [C 10051/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 17, 1938, 9.0 p.m.

I submit following comments after my conversation with Field-Marshal Göring this morning.

If Prime Minister had not come out to Germany when he did, Herr Hitler would already have given instructions to his army to protect the lives and property of Sudetens across the frontier.

No solution is possible now except on basis of self-determination. It will be quite useless to propose another meeting except on basis of acceptance of that principle.

If principle is accepted it will be open to His Majesty's Government to put forward proposals regarding method and procedure. It is in these two latter respects that we can hope to extract 'concessions' from Germany. There is no possible compromise so far as principle of self-determination is concerned.

Clear issue therefore lies between certitude of German aggression against Czechoslovakia if we refuse right of self-determination and probable Czech preferring [*sic*] war rather than submission to acceptance of principle of self-determination. They will still hope that their resistance will oblige Western Powers and Russia to come to their help.

In other words if we decline to admit self-determination we must face world war: if we recognise it, we must coerce Czechoslovakia or sit by and watch her coerced by Germany.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

No. 918

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 18, 8.50 a.m.)*  
*No. 624 Telegraphic [C 10007/4786/18]*

PRAGUE, September 18,<sup>1</sup> 1938, 12.10 a.m.

Military Attaché was informed today by General Staff that in view of increasing numbers of reservists being called to the colours daily in Germany it may be necessary at any moment to call three or four classes up in Czechoslovakia for reasons of security. The decision to do so however has not yet been taken but preparations for this measure, which did not constitute mobilization according to Czechoslovakian law, were now in hand.

Please inform War Office.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was drafted on September 17.

No. 919

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 18, 8.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 627 Telegraphic [C 10009/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 18, 1938, 1.45 a.m.

My telegram No. 615.<sup>1</sup>

Minister for Foreign Affairs believes that Herr Hitler wants to recreate the former Holy Roman Empire and to swallow the whole of Bohemia (compare paragraph 2 of my telegram No. 25<sup>2</sup> March 12).

He told me . . .<sup>3</sup> that in Herr Hitler's entourage it was being suggested that the example of Ireland should be followed. The Sudeten areas would have the same relation to the Reich as Northern Ireland and the Czechs might be given something akin to that of Southern Ireland within the German orbit.

Repeated to Berlin Saving.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. In this telegram of September 17, Mr. Newton reported that the Minister for Foreign Affairs had informed him that 'he had been charged by the President to state, in the name of the President and of the Government, that a plebiscite could not be accepted by Czechoslovakia'. The reasons for this attitude were those that Dr. Krofta had already given Mr. Newton on September 11, namely that (i) there was no provision in the Constitution for a plebiscite, which would be unprecedented in times of peace; (ii) in the case of the Aland Isles dispute in 1920 an international commission had expressed the view that a recognized right of secession would produce political anarchy; in Dr. Krofta's view an example in Czechoslovakia would affect minority groups elsewhere; (iii) a plebiscite would be technically impossible since no compact and homogeneous area adjacent to Germany existed; (iv) if such an amputation were performed Czechoslovakia would be entirely at the mercy of Germany; (v) owing to terrorization, as the example of Austria showed, a plebiscite would not serve the cause of justice; (vi) Czech public opinion would not accept the dismemberment of the country, and a plebiscite would therefore increase rather than diminish the danger of war.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. See No. 86, note 1, in Volume I of this Series.

<sup>3</sup> The text is here uncertain.

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 18, 2.0 a.m.)  
No. 628 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10010/4786/18]*

PRAGUE, September 18,<sup>1</sup> 1938

A high official of Ministry of Foreign Affairs has just called at this Legation at 11.30 p.m. to say that information now in possession of Czechoslovak Government showed that Germany was planning an attack on Czechoslovakia immediately after September 20 and probably on September 23. He cited as evidence of this intention fact that ten divisions ready for immediate action were concentrated in neighbourhood of frontier, that four regiments of motorised police which had been due for mobilisation on October 1 had in fact been mobilised as from September 13 and lastly a proclamation issued by Herr Henlein constituting a 'Freikorps'; this latter was alleged to have received orders to be ready for action as from today Sunday.

In the circumstances Czechoslovak Government felt that they had no alternative but to mobilise. By this is meant general mobilisation and not merely the calling up of three or four classes referred to in my telegram No. 624.<sup>2</sup> In view of the international negotiations however which were now in progress Czechoslovak Government desired to receive view of French and British Governments and would wait before taking action until they had received replies to enquiries which Czechoslovak Ministers at Paris and London<sup>3</sup> had been instructed to make.

Please inform War Office and Air Ministry.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was drafted before midnight September 17-18.

<sup>2</sup> No. 918.

<sup>3</sup> Up to the time this telegram was received no such enquiries had been made in London. See No. 927.

*Note by Mr. Jebb of a telephone message from the Czechoslovak Minister  
[C 10220/1941/18]*

September 18, 1938

The Czechoslovak Minister rang me up at 11.40 a.m. today with two messages as follows:—

1. M. Hodza is proposing to make an announcement on the radio at 12 noon today to the effect that the Czechoslovak Government, in spite of the provocation of the Henleinists, are 'just as anxious as they ever were to come to an acceptable agreement' and that 'no policy of vengeance will be practised in any shape or form'.

2. The German Minister in Prague informed the Czechoslovak Government last night that—



(a) a number of Czechoslovak citizens (including Jews) will be arrested on German territory equalling the number of Sudeten Germans who had been arrested on Czechoslovak territory.

(b) if any death-sentence is carried out on arrested Sudeten citizens in Czechoslovakia, an equal number of Czech citizens will be shot in Germany.

N.B. M. Masaryk added that in point of fact not one death-sentence on Sudeten Germans had been announced in Czechoslovakia and that only one person had been arrested in accordance with the powers invested in the Government under the 'Standrecht'.

GLADWYN JEBB

No. 922

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 18, 12.45 p.m.)

No. 629 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10011/4786/18]

PRAGUE, September 18, 1938

My telegram No. 628.<sup>1</sup>

Military Attaché called on Chief of the General Staff this morning to enquire into the question of mobilization. He was told that no decision to mobilize had been taken, only action having been to send telegrams to London and Paris drawing attention to dangerous position in which Czechoslovakia now found herself, a position which would normally call for mobilization and asking for advice as to whether in view of negotiations now proceeding in London, army should in fact be mobilized. In replying to Colonel Stronge, General Krejci emphasized the start Germans had already obtained over the Czechs and impossibility of catching up once war had actually started. He maintained that nobody could deny to the Czechs the right to defend themselves except Herr Hitler who had openly said that defensive measures (May 21) would not again be tolerated.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 920.

No. 923

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 18, 1.0 p.m.)

No. 474 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10054/1941/18]

BERLIN, September 18, 1938

Evidence at my disposal points to a considerable concentration of troops north of Vienna as well as in Breslau and Hof areas. Indications are that peak of preparations will be reached in about a week's time.

Field-Marshal Göring assured me yesterday that air force was ready to act at once at an hour's notice. There appears to be concentration of troop-carrying aeroplanes in the neighbourhood of Berlin. These might well be used to fly S.S. to occupied territory.

Whilst I personally am confident Herr Hitler will abide by his assurance not to move pending London deliberations unless absolutely forced to do so, he is only waiting in expectation that principle of self-determination for Sudeten will be accepted at once without qualification by Western Powers. Should this expectation not be fulfilled he will march and it would be quite useless to imagine or hope that any advice, warning or offer of a compromise will deter him.

At the risk of exceeding my proper functions as Ambassador I am compelled to tell you that this is an absolute certainty. It would be the gravest error to endeavour now to attempt to save face by wrapping up unconditional acceptance of self-determination with conditional 'provided that Sudeten justify etc.'. Time for bargaining is after acceptance of International Commission and at the next meeting between the Prime Minister and Herr Hitler.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

#### No. 924

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 18, 2.0 p.m.)*

*No. 630 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10012/4786/18]*

PRAGUE, September 18, 1938

My telegram No. 628.<sup>1</sup>

On calling at Ministry for Foreign Affairs this morning I learnt the following very significant circumstance.

German State Secretary Dr. Weizsäcker summoned Czechoslovak Chargé d'Affaires M. Schubert to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday, September 17, and stated that it was understood that a large number of reservists had been called up in Czechoslovakia on September 14 to the number it was said of eight classes. Dr. Weizsäcker declared that he had been charged by Government of the Reich to inform Czechoslovak Government that such a mobilization might have different consequences from that on May 21. Chargé d'Affaires had replied that Dr. Weizsäcker's information was not correct and that only a small number of reservists had been called up. Measure had not been directed against Germany but had been taken to ensure safety of objects of military importance in Sudeten area having regard to the fact that in recent attempts at revolt attacks had been made on railway stations etc. Dr. Weizsäcker replied that he took note of this reply and would report it to his Government.

I drew Dr. Krofta's attention to significance of warning given by German State Secretary and also to warning in Herr Hitler's speech that he would not tolerate another May 21. At the same time I said I realised the dilemma

<sup>1</sup> No. 920.

which Czechoslovak Government were in and the dangers to which their country was exposed and made it clear that none of my comments was to be taken as indicating any expression of opinion as to what Czechoslovak Government should or should not do.

I said I did not know yet whether or no His Majesty's Government feeling [*sic*, ? felt in] the position to express any views and took opportunity to show Minister for Foreign Affairs my telegram No. 628.<sup>2</sup> He approved of contents but explained that while information of Czechoslovak Government was that German preparations would be completed for an attack on perhaps September 22 or 23 they did not of course know that such an attack was actually intended. From a military point of view however Government ought to mobilise.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>2</sup> No. 920.

#### No. 925

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*  
*No. 378 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10198/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 18, 1938, 3.50 p.m.

In case there should be either leakage to the press here or abroad or deliberate dissemination of alleged decisions during present meeting of British and French Ministers in London, please do anything you can through Minister for Foreign Affairs and others to let Herr Hitler know that he should disregard entirely anything appearing in the press other than any official communiqué that may be issued.<sup>1</sup>

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> Sir N. Henderson reported at 8.20 p.m. that he had informed the State Secretary accordingly and that the latter had undertaken to pass the message at once to Herr Hitler.

#### No. 926

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*  
*No. 382 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10102/4786/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 18, 1938, 5.20 p.m.

1. We have received intimation from Czechoslovak Government that information which they claim to have concerning German troop movements has led them to consider possibility of mobilisation. But before proceeding to this step they have consulted His Majesty's Government and the French Government.

2. Relying on assurances given to Prime Minister by the Chancellor, His Majesty's Government are advising Czechoslovak Government to abstain from mobilisation measures pending further negotiations. French Government are giving similar advice.

3. Please immediately inform German Government.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

No. 927

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 297 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10010/4786/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 18, 1938, 5.45 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 628.<sup>1</sup>

1. His Majesty's Government trust that nothing may occur to impede effort which they are making for maintenance of peace, and therefore, while fully recognising that decision on this question is one for Czechoslovak Government, they would urge Czechoslovak Government to abstain from mobilisation measures pending further negotiations.

2. I understand French Government are making similar reply.

3. We are simultaneously making representations in Berlin.

4. Please inform Czechoslovak Government in above sense.

5. For your information, Czechoslovak Minister here has not yet approached us on the subject.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 920.

No. 928

RECORD OF ANGLO-FRENCH CONVERSATIONS HELD AT  
NO. 10 DOWNING STREET ON SEPTEMBER 18, 1938  
[C 10729/1941/18]

Present: *United Kingdom*: Mr. Neville Chamberlain, Viscount Halifax, Sir John Simon, Sir Samuel Hoare, Sir R. Vansittart, Sir Horace Wilson, The Hon. Sir A. Cadogan, Mr. E. E. Bridges, Mr. William Strang, Mr. F. K. Roberts.

*France*: M. Édouard Daladier, M. Georges Bonnet, M. Charles Corbin, M. Alexis Léger, M. Charles Rochat, M. Jules Henry, M. Roland de Margerie.

FIRST MEETING, September 18, 11 a.m.

Mr. Chamberlain opened the proceedings by saying how pleased he was to see his French friends again and to have them opposite to him for the resumption of their conversations. He wished to express his personal thanks to M. Daladier and M. Bonnet for the generous words they had spoken about his recent adventurous journey to Berchtesgaden. He wished to assure them that in taking this initiative he had only sought to serve a common purpose and to save the peace of Europe which they all equally desired.

M. Daladier thanked the Prime Minister for his kind words. As he had already declared in France when he had first heard of the Prime Minister's bold initiative, and as he had repeated to him personally at Croydon that morning, he was certain that the Prime Minister's action had met with universal approbation throughout the world.

Mr. Chamberlain, coming straight to the business which had brought them there, said he must inform the French Ministers of a message which His Majesty's Government had received early this morning from Prague. This was to the effect that the Czechoslovak Government had decided, in view of recent information they had received suggesting an imminent German attack, that they must proceed to general mobilisation. In view, however, of the international conversations now proceeding in London, the Czechoslovak Government would wait to learn the views of the British and French Governments before taking this action. This communication raised a most serious question and clearly it would be necessary to send some reply in the course of the day. He thought, however, this matter might stand over for the present till he had had an opportunity of informing the French Ministers of the results of his conversation with Herr Hitler.

This conversation had been between himself and Herr Hitler alone, only the interpreter being present. It had lasted for three hours and he could say at once that it had become clear to him very early in the conversation that the situation was much more urgent and critical than he had supposed when he had undertaken his mission to Germany. He had found an extraordinary atmosphere of excitement surrounding the Chancellor. The wildest and most fantastic stories were coming in every moment from Czechoslovakia and were greedily swallowed. These stories served to raise the temperature to boiling point, and they were used by Herr Hitler to emphasise his view of the urgency of an immediate solution being found for the Sudeten problem. At the same time, Mr. Chamberlain wished to make clear that most of the conversation had been carried on in quiet tones. Only occasionally had the Chancellor worked himself up into a state of excitement when words poured forth in torrents and he appeared completely to forget what he had previously been discussing.

Mr. Chamberlain had supposed that he might have begun the conversation with a general consideration of Anglo-German relations. But the Chancellor had soon said that the Czechoslovak question was so urgent that it must be dealt with at once. He instanced in particular that 300 Sudetens had been killed the day before and quoted harrowing details of the flight of refugees from Sudeten districts into Germany. Mr. Chamberlain had pointed out to Herr Hitler that previous information of this nature, when subjected to investigation, had proved inaccurate. He had, however, naturally agreed that if this was the view of the Chancellor it would be better to get down to the Czechoslovak question at once. He was, however, very surprised to find that Herr Hitler thought it necessary as a preface to give him an historical retrospect of his general attitude towards Germany's various neighbours. He thought it worth repeating Herr Hitler's remarks in this connexion as they showed the impression he wished to convey. He first referred to Poland and said that in view of the German non-aggression pact with that country, he now regarded the Polish frontier as secure. Turning to France, he remarked that if the Saar had gone to France that would have been the source of acute friction between the two countries. But as the Saar was now German, he had

no further demands to make of France and definitely repeated his renunciation of Alsace and Lorraine. Germany's western frontiers were therefore no longer the subject of any German claims. As regards Belgium and Holland, he had made treaties with those countries which made them secure against German aggression. He had made the Naval Treaty with Great Britain because he was determined that there should never again be war between Germany and Great Britain. Turning finally to Memel, he said he was content to leave matters as they were so long as the Lithuanians respected the Memel Statute.

Herr Hitler then developed at some length his views on racial unity, which, he said, had been his dominating preoccupation since his birth. The ideal goal would be to bring all Germans back into the Reich, but he realised the necessity of distinguishing what was possible from what was impossible, as some of these Germans lived far from the frontiers of Germany. On the other hand, 10,000,000 Germans had been living in countries adjacent to Germany, and for them he claimed that the Reich was the only possible refuge. Through the 'Anschluss' of Austria, 7,000,000 Germans had now returned to the Reich. There remained the 3,000,000 Sudeten Germans who formed his principal present preoccupation. At this point Herr Hitler had become very animated as he developed the theme of the wrongs and oppressions which these Germans had suffered at the hands of the Czechs. He asked Mr. Chamberlain how he would like 3,000,000 English to be subjected to the rule of what he termed a sub-nation. They should and must come back into the Reich. If they could not achieve this on their own, he had undertaken to support them and bring them in himself. He definitely stated that he was prepared to risk a world war to accomplish what he considered essential.

At this point Mr. Chamberlain had interrupted Herr Hitler to ask him a question, the answer to which he regarded as of considerable importance. Supposing, for the sake of argument, that these Sudeten Germans returned to the Reich, would Herr Hitler be satisfied with this? Would this be the end of his demands? Or was there something more? The Prime Minister informed Herr Hitler very frankly that there were many people in Great Britain who did not believe what Herr Hitler said. They thought he was only deceiving us in setting such limitations to his present demands, and that he had plans in his head which were entirely inconsistent with his public declarations and which he intended to carry out at some time or other. The Prime Minister would therefore like to receive from Herr Hitler some assurance that what he had said was the limit of his claims, or, alternatively, a clear statement that he was aiming at the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia and the occupation of a considerable portion of that country. Herr Hitler had not appeared to resent such plain speaking, and he had answered at once that he only wanted the return of the Sudetens and that would be the end so far as he was concerned. He wanted nothing more in Central or South-Eastern Europe. He was not interested in other races, because, as he had already explained to Mr. Chamberlain, it was racial unity which appealed to him. He did not, therefore, want any Czechs or Magyars. But

he went on to say that it was intolerable that Czechoslovakia should remain like a spear-head in his side. He had explained that, in consequence of the treaty between Czechoslovakia and Russia, he was constantly exposed to a danger close to the very heart of Germany, which he once again described as intolerable. Mr. Chamberlain had then asked Herr Hitler whether, supposing, for the sake of argument, the Sudeten Germans had rejoined the Reich, he would still regard the smaller and weaker remnant of the Czechoslovak State as a serious danger to so great and powerful a country as Germany. At first Herr Hitler said 'yes'. But he had later admitted that, if the Sudeten Germans were given the right of self-determination—and it was quite clear that they wanted to come into the Reich—then similar demands would be put forward by the Polish and Hungarian minorities in Czechoslovakia, and what would be left of that country would be so insignificant that he would not bother his head about it.

The Prime Minister had not pursued this particular aspect of the question at the moment. He pointed out to Herr Hitler that, as practical men, whatever theories might be held about the right of self-determination (Herr Hitler had asked him how the democratic countries could refuse the application of a principle which they, and not he, had invented), they must consider the practical difficulties involved in its application even in areas where the Sudeten Germans were 80 per cent. of the total population. There would, moreover, remain large numbers of Germans in parts of Czechoslovakia and important Czech minorities in the Sudeten areas. Herr Hitler replied by proposing that the minorities should be transferred, the Germans in Czech areas moving into the areas transferred to Germany, and the Czech minorities moving back into Czechoslovakia. Alternatively, each minority could remain where it was under adequate safeguards for the protection of minorities. But the Sudeten minorities must be safeguarded as effectively as the Czech minorities. The Prime Minister was explaining the practical difficulties to Herr Hitler when the latter interrupted by recalling his own earlier remarks about the present persecution of the Sudeten Germans. They now seemed to be discussing purely academic questions when the reality involved in the oppression of Germans had to be considered. Three hundred had been killed in the last few days, villages been besieged and populations expelled. The only way in which the problem could be settled was by the return of the Sudetens to the Reich and their liberation from their Czech oppressors. This must be done and the problem solved in this way at once.

Mr. Chamberlain had felt some annoyance at this interruption and said plainly to Herr Hitler that if he had made up his mind to use force without any further delay, he would like to know why Herr Hitler had allowed him to come all this way to see him, merely to waste his time. If Herr Hitler was prepared to discuss matters, well and good. But if he were not, the Prime Minister might as well leave at once. If Herr Hitler maintained that, owing to the incidents now taking place, it was impossible to carry on any conversations within the time reasonably required for them, would it not be possible for Herr Hitler and the Prime Minister to issue a joint appeal to both sides to

refrain from violence and provocation and thus allow the conversations to continue? To this suggestion, Herr Hitler had replied very emphatically, although without any particular heat, that he did not see how he could appeal to the people who were being shot, to the refugees and other victims of Czech oppression. An appeal should, on the contrary, be issued to the other side, to the Czechs. The Prime Minister had replied that in that case there seemed nothing else to be done unless Herr Hitler were prepared to make some suggestion himself. At this point Herr Hitler's whole manner changed and he began to speak thoughtfully and quietly. He had said everything depended upon the attitude of the British Government. If the Prime Minister were to say that the British Government could not in any circumstances accept the idea of self-determination, then it would be useless to continue the conversations. If, however, the Prime Minister could give him an assurance that His Majesty's Government would accept in principle the idea that the right of self-determination should be put into operation in respect of the Sudeten Germans, then it might be possible to go on to discuss ways and means and questions of procedure. The Prime Minister had said he could only make one answer. He was not authorised to speak on behalf of his colleagues in the Government on such a question and could not give any assurance without consulting them. There were also others who had a right to be consulted, in particular the French Government. Lord Runciman also had the right to express his views. If he had correctly understood Herr Hitler's views, then the best thing to do was to close the conversations for the moment and for him to return to England, where he could have the necessary consultations and make preparations for a further meeting to resume their conversation. Herr Hitler agreed that this was a possible procedure and he expressed regret at the necessity of a second journey for the Prime Minister. (He had incidentally mentioned at the beginning of the conversation that when he had received the Prime Minister's message he had thought of offering to come himself to London but had realised there were certain practical difficulties in the way.) He had therefore suggested that a place near the German frontier be found at which he could meet the Prime Minister on his second journey.

Mr. Chamberlain then referred to the present situation in Czechoslovakia, which Herr Hitler had represented to him as being so acute that an explosion might take place at any moment. It was therefore essential to consider how the situation might be maintained while the Prime Minister returned to London and completed the necessary consultations. Herr Hitler quite appreciated this point and had replied that he hoped the Prime Minister would do what he could to induce the Czechoslovak Government to take measures which would avoid the danger of further incidents. He had instanced in particular the withdrawal of the state police from the Sudeten areas, the confinement of Czech troops to barracks and the cessation of Czech mobilisation measures. The Prime Minister had asked whether Herr Hitler could not also do something on his side. Herr Hitler had replied that the German military machine was most powerful and formidable. Once it had been set



in motion it would be impossible to stop it. He was therefore prepared to give an assurance that, pending the resumption of his conversation with the Prime Minister, he would give no order which would set this machine in motion if he could help it. He regarded it as necessary to make this qualification, as something terrible might happen in Czechoslovakia. The Prime Minister had derived the impression, whilst he was watching Herr Hitler and talking to him, that he would be better rather than worse than his word, and that he could be relied upon unless something quite unexpected occurred.

Mr. Chamberlain had received subsequent confirmation of this impression from Sir Nevile Henderson, who had been instructed to see Field-Marshal Göring, who was regarded by His Majesty's Government as on the whole a moderating influence in spite of his speeches, and to impress upon the Field-Marshal the absolute necessity of not allowing any action to be taken on the German side which might wreck the conversations which had been opened at Berchtesgaden. The Prime Minister then read to the meeting certain passages from Sir N. Henderson's telegram No. 464<sup>1</sup> of the 17th September, reporting his interview with Field-Marshal Göring. The latter had said that there was no need for undue anxiety. Herr Hitler had given his word and it could be relied upon absolutely. Unless something catastrophic occurred, Germany would be patient, at any rate until the next meeting took place. Field-Marshal Göring had explained that by 'catastrophic' he meant nothing less than a military revolution, overthrow of the present government, deliberate massacre of one hundred Sudetens or deliberate bombardment of German posts across the frontier (not just a few shots) or upon refugees who were flocking into Germany. He repeated his definite and categorical assurances in this respect several times, always repeating the word 'catastrophic'. At the same time he told Sir N. Henderson equally definitely that no other solution except self-determination was now possible. If the British and French Governments accepted this principle, the German Government was prepared to discuss methods of execution, but it would be absolutely futile to put forward any new plan which fell short of that principle. In a subsequent telegram, Sir N. Henderson had pointed out that Field-Marshal Göring's remarks fully agreed with Herr Hitler's statement to Mr. Chamberlain at Berchtesgaden and suggested that the British and French Governments could not neglect these clear indications that, if the right of self-determination were not admitted, the immediate prospect of world war must be faced.

Mr. Chamberlain then summed up his impressions. His conversation with Herr Hitler had been conducted in a difficult atmosphere. It must be recognised that Herr Hitler had it in his power to bring about a general catastrophe. It was possible that he might not wish to attack Czechoslovakia unless he thought he could do this safely. But if he did decide to take the risk of a general war or if he had got into such a position in Germany that he felt some definite gesture was necessary, then nothing could be done to stop him. Herr Hitler's assurance that he would not at present set the military machine in motion had given us a brief space in which to decide what could be done.

<sup>1</sup> No. 910.

There was only one condition on which violent action could be avoided. This was that we should be prepared to discuss certain measures of self-determination. If we could accept the view that this was the next step to be taken, the Prime Minister understood that the German Government would be willing to discuss the ways and means of putting this principle into effect in an orderly fashion. Therefore, the first and most vital question we had to ask ourselves was whether we were prepared to say that we would resume negotiations with Herr Hitler on the basis that the right of self-determination would be accepted for the Sudeten Germans. If we were not so disposed, we must expect that Herr Hitler's reply would be to give the order to march, and we knew that all measures had already been taken for action at the shortest possible notice. He had explained the position to his French friends, and he would be grateful to learn their views on the decision which had now to be taken.

M. Daladier said that he had listened with great interest to the Prime Minister's account of his conversation with Herr Hitler. He realised that it could certainly not have been of an agreeable nature. It was quite evident from Mr. Chamberlain's account that the Führer lived in an atmosphere of exaltation and excitement, which was particularly noticeable in his immediate entourage. On the other hand, we knew that the majority of the generals of the German Army were in favour of peace. This was the general sentiment throughout Germany and particularly in industrial circles. Round Herr Hitler, on the other hand, there was a state of racial exaltation. Discussion with a man of such a passionate and mystical character was naturally very difficult. But mysticism did not exclude skill. He had recognised in Herr Hitler's remarks the record of Nazi propaganda which had been played again and again, i.e., the usual statements that Germany always wanted peace and that she was animated by the most peaceful motives, that Herr Hitler had the best intentions, but that Germany was menaced with destruction by covetous neighbours. He would remind the meeting that not so very long ago Field-Marshal Göring had assured Lord Halifax that he did not think of annexing Sudeten territories. Not many months had passed and we could now see that Germany was contemplating precisely the annexation of German [*sic*] territories and probably had many other objects in view as well. Nevertheless, M. Daladier recognised that in present circumstances it was useless to hark back to the past, and he agreed that the time had now come for a definite decision. He thought he was expressing the impressions of all the French delegation in saying that the French Government was now faced with facts and proposals which had never hitherto come under consideration. His Majesty's Government, on the other hand, had had an opportunity of deliberating already on these very proposals. They had also had the advantage of learning the opinion of Lord Runciman, who had just returned from Czechoslovakia, where he had seen all the most important persons among the Czechs and the Sudetens alike. Although the French Government were grateful for the information just communicated to them by the Prime

Minister, His Majesty's Government had had a little more opportunity to consider its significance and had also other information at its disposal. In these circumstances he felt that it was for His Majesty's Government rather than for the French Government to express their views on the proposal under consideration.

Mr. Chamberlain thought that M. Daladier's concluding remarks were only reasonable. He would therefore like to give the French Ministers an account of Lord Runciman's views which had just been communicated to His Majesty's Government. Lord Runciman had been asked to return from Czechoslovakia at once in order that they might receive the benefit of his views in any decision which had to be taken by the British and French Governments. In the first place Lord Runciman had spoken to the Prime Minister very freely and frankly about Dr. Benes. He had reported his conversation with Dr. Benes just before he left Prague, which must have been very painful for the latter. When Dr. Benes had expressed some nervousness about the possibility that the interests of Czechoslovakia might be sacrificed in the conversations between the Prime Minister and Herr Hitler, Lord Runciman had replied that any sacrifice of Czechoslovak interests could only be laid at Dr. Benes's door. He had throughout been dilatory and had delayed putting forward the necessary proposals until the time when they might be accepted had long passed. The situation had steadily deteriorated because Dr. Benes had always been behind the march of events instead of ahead of them. Mr. Chamberlain thought it might be useful to bear the observations of Lord Runciman in mind when we were reflecting upon the change that had taken place in German demands. As M. Daladier had pointed out a little time ago, German leaders had indicated that there was no intention of annexing Sudeten territories. If Dr. Benes had been more prompt, an agreement might have been reached on such a basis. Lord Runciman had made it clear that, in his view, after the events of the past week in Czechoslovakia, no scheme of mediation or any other arrangement between the Czechs and Sudetens had any chance of success. Lord Runciman now took the view that the only possible solution which remained was some scheme based on acceptance of the principle of self-determination. He did not think the Sudetens would ever again work with the Czechs in one State.

The Prime Minister therefore thought that the issue was, in the first instance, a very simple one. It was a question of whether or not to accept the principle of self-determination. If it were accepted there might be many ways of carrying it out. But the first issue remained the simple one of principle. On that issue the French Government were in a different position to ourselves, since they were bound by treaty obligations, whereas we were not. It therefore seemed to him that it was for them to say whether, in view of their treaty obligations, they felt it necessary to resist what, after his conversation with Herr Hitler, he could only describe as the sole condition on which peaceful negotiations could proceed.

M. Daladier said that he thoroughly grasped the last idea expressed by

the Prime Minister. It was true that the United Kingdom had no obligations to Czechoslovakia, whereas France had very precise obligations. Therefore Mr. Chamberlain considered that it was for the French Government in the first place to state its opinion. On the other hand, it must be recognised that the French Government were in a much more delicate position when confronted with such a proposal concerning a country to which they were united by ties of friendship and alliance. It was always a most delicate matter to suggest to a friend and ally that he should submit to the amputation of one leg, or, indeed, possibly of both legs. The position of the French Government was therefore a very difficult and painful one. M. Daladier had observed that in his remarks to the Prime Minister at Berchtesgaden Herr Hitler had not seemed to insist so much on a point of doctrine as on the very practical and immediate question of the Sudeten minority. That is to say, on the problem of a minority of German race within another State. He therefore thought it would be better to limit their consideration to the Sudeten question itself rather than to embark on a general theoretical and doctrinal question on which Herr Hitler did not appear to have insisted. If we were to consider the question of self-determination and that of a plebiscite, M. Daladier would have very definite reservations to express. To him a plebiscite seemed a weapon with which the German Government could keep Central Europe in a constant state of alarm and suspense. Throughout that region different races were closely intermingled, and a general state of feverish tension could only be favourable to ultimate German aims. Everywhere there was a German minority Germany could put forward first a claim for autonomy and then gradually lead the way up to annexation. He was certain that if we were now to admit the principle of self-determination in so broad a way, this weapon would then be used everywhere where it suited Herr Hitler's convenience. Therefore the procedure proposed seemed to him very dangerous. If we followed Germany in her present claim instead of negotiating a peaceful solution to the present serious incidents, we should only be encouraging a policy which in the long run must lead to war. If the principle were applied in Czechoslovakia it would not satisfy Herr Hitler that the Sudeten minority had returned to Greater Germany and to the Hitler régime, and it would then lead to the complete destruction of the Czechoslovak State. Agitation and propaganda had already begun, and soon the Poles and Magyars would be making the same demands as the Sudetens. Even the Slovaks, who had hitherto made no demands and were, on the contrary, loyal to the Czechoslovak State, might be induced to join the chorus. We should not then have reached a peaceful solution, but only have embarked on a very dangerous policy. Roumania would be the next step in Germany's march eastwards. There was already a Nazi Führer in Transylvania. Soon, in spite of the illusions harboured by the Poles, there would be a Führer in the Polish Corridor. There was already a Führer in Alsace, although M. Daladier had had to put him in hospital, which seemed the best place for him. M. Daladier therefore repeated that to accept the proposal put forward could only result in increasing the general tension in the political

life of Europe. Instead of establishing peace in Czechoslovakia, we should have only opened the door to further conflicts and eventually to a European war.

Mr. Chamberlain did not disagree generally with M. Daladier's observations. He would, however, observe that he had not understood Herr Hitler to ask us to accept the broad principle of self-determination as capable of general application. On the contrary, he had emphasised that he was only interested in the Sudeten question. He did not want the acceptance of any general principle, but he naturally found this ground convenient on which to base his present claim for the return of the Sudeten population to Germany, since he could ask the democratic countries how they could possibly refuse a claim based upon a principle they had themselves proclaimed. If, therefore, we limited the recognition of self-determination to this particular problem of the Sudeten Germans and dealt with it in a practical manner, Mr. Chamberlain did not anticipate any great difficulties from the German side.

M. Daladier said that, if he had understood correctly, Herr Hitler had said that, once the Sudetens had been given the opportunity of exercising their right of self-determination in a plebiscite, he would not have to bother his head any more about Czechoslovakia, since the other minorities in that country would claim the same right. It was clear from this that, once the principle had been admitted, its application to other cases could not be prevented. Herr Hitler therefore regarded this principle as a weapon with which to disintegrate Czechoslovakia.

Mr. Chamberlain agreed that Herr Hitler certainly considered that if the principle were carried out in regard to the Sudeten Germans the same rights would also be claimed by the Magyars and the Poles. He had not actually mentioned the Slovaks. But Herr Hitler had said clearly that he himself was not interested in these other minorities. Mr. Chamberlain agreed, however, with M. Daladier that there was every justification for anticipating similar demands from them, and, in fact, we had already been told by the Hungarian and Polish Governments that they desired similar treatment for their minorities.

M. Daladier said that it seemed to him very difficult for the French Ministers to express a definite view at this stage. They had not had an opportunity of discussing the matter with their colleagues, and it therefore seemed to him difficult to accept the principle and the method proposed. He would prefer to ask His Majesty's Government whether, in view of recent developments, they considered that the principle and method proposed should be accepted.

Mr. Chamberlain drew attention to a secret paper which had just been put into his hands, showing that German military preparations, far from slackening off after his visit to Herr Hitler, had intensified. In view of this he felt he must ask M. Daladier whether he had any possible alternative to propose instead of the proposal at present under discussion, that the principle

of self-determination should be accepted as a first stage on the understanding that ways and means should be discussed later.

M. Daladier said that, if he understood aright, Mr. Chamberlain had asked what other alternative he saw to the procedure proposed. He would reply that the French Government had already defined their position. They were after all bound by their Treaty with Czechoslovakia, which had been concluded by M. Briand. In spite of whatever juridical commentaries might be made, in all honour and morality, France had no right to regard her engagements as null and void. German troops had long been concentrated against Czechoslovakia. The French Government knew that a certain number of divisions, which were estimated at 20-22, had been directed towards the Czech frontiers. These were not new facts, but comparatively old. Whilst Germany had been negotiating she had been completing her military preparations, and he instanced in particular the presence of armoured divisions on the Moravian frontier. France had engagements she could not avoid. It was true that certain suggestions had appeared in the French papers and in private conversations, such as always appeared at any time of crisis, to the effect that France was not prepared to meet her obligations. Such suggestions could be ignored. He did not think, and in this he was expressing the views of the French Government and of the French people, that France could desert her ally. No Frenchman would be capable of committing such a crime if France were confronted with a sudden German attack against Czechoslovakia, carried out whilst these negotiations were proceeding in London with a view to finding a peaceful solution of the Sudeten question. In such circumstances no Frenchman could avoid doing his duty.

The French Ministers had, however, come to London to endeavour to find a peaceful solution. The French Government and the French people, like other Governments and other peoples, did not want a war, which could only lead to general destruction. They would therefore make every effort to reach some solution. But France had her obligations and could not escape them. Lord Runciman himself had been trying to bring the two parties together for some time past. It was no doubt true that Dr. Benes had been too slow, particularly in view of the representations which had been made to him after the Franco-British conversations in London at the end of April. But we should not lose sight of the fact that Dr. Benes himself had been confronted by serious difficulties. He had certainly not been helped much by Herr Hitler, in spite of the latter's proclaimed desire for peace. Nor by the Sudeten leaders, who represented Herr Hitler in Czechoslovakia. There had been constant menaces and provocations on the part of Herr Henlein and the Sudeten leaders. M. Daladier, whilst recognising Lord Runciman's closer personal experience of the problem, did not agree with him that the Sudetens and the Czechs could not live together. They had after all done so for 20 years, without any war or menace of war. During that period it had not been necessary to hold any Conference to discuss the Sudeten problem. He therefore concluded that, although faults had no doubt been committed by

Dr. Benes, these were not so great as the faults of the other side. Competent British and French observers confirmed that for some days past there had been no serious incidents in Czechoslovakia and since Herr Henlein's flight calm had prevailed in the Sudeten country. This fact should be borne in mind with regard to Herr Hitler's remarks about the Sudeten deaths and Czech terrorisation which had been proved false. M. Daladier did not believe that the Sudetens were not prepared to live on good terms with their Czech neighbours, although it would, of course, be necessary to go a long way in the direction of autonomy with suitable guarantees.

He feared, however, that Germany's real aim was the disintegration of Czechoslovakia and the realisation of pan-German ideals through a march to the East. Roumania would be the next country to suffer and here a German minority in Transylvania would be used as a lever. The result would be that in a very short time Germany would be master of Europe, and, in particular, of the wheat and petrol of South-Eastern Europe. Within one year we might expect her to turn back against France and Great Britain, who would then have to meet her in much more difficult circumstances than those existing to-day. M. Daladier was therefore looking for some possible alternative solution other than that of a plebiscite, which was so dangerous for Czechoslovakia and for the peace of Europe, and to find one he would be prepared to meet Herr Hitler's demands in favour of the Sudeten Germans so far as was possible. Thanks to Mr. Chamberlain's report, the French Government were now aware of the general situation, but they had only just received this information and were therefore called upon to improvise their views. In these circumstances he would prefer to hear what conclusions had been reached by the British Government who had had more opportunity to examine the position.

Lord Halifax said he was sure that the British Ministers were most grateful to M. Daladier for explaining so frankly and so fully the thoughts in his mind. He wished to say that there was one thing which was uppermost in his own mind and that of the Prime Minister and his other colleagues. Nothing was further from their thoughts than that the French Government should fail to honour their obligations to the Czechoslovak Government. We fully appreciated what they must feel on this point, since we were able to appreciate our own feeling if we had been placed in a similar position. It was largely for this reason that we felt it impossible to form any decision ourselves on these grave matters until we had had the opportunity of consultation with the French Government, who were more directly and more immediately concerned than we were ourselves. With those thoughts in our minds we had felt it vital—and we were sure the French Government would agree—that we should continue to act in the closest co-operation and in a spirit of complete confidence.

Following this line of thought, it seemed of great importance that we should know whether, in the judgment of the French Government, it was possible—and if so, by what means—to reconcile their Treaty obligations with the

fulfilment of the condition which, as the Prime Minister had made quite plain, was essential to enable him to continue the negotiations upon which, with the approval of the French Government, he had embarked with Herr Hitler. If he might speak quite frankly, Lord Halifax's feeling, and he thought that of the Prime Minister, would be that the very fact of the existence of French obligations towards Czechoslovakia entitled them—it might be said perhaps that it even bound them—to consider the whole problem from this particular point of view and to advise whether the condition laid down as essential for further negotiations to take place was one which could be considered.

Lord Halifax shared to the full M. Daladier's doubts and misgivings and he fully recognised the pitfalls involved in recognition of the general principle of the right of self-determination. It was obvious that everything depended upon the exact interpretation of such general principles. With M. Daladier, he recognised all the difficulties and dangers involved in a plebiscite. M. Daladier had said that his object was to search for a peaceful settlement. In this connexion Lord Halifax thought it essential to keep clearly in our minds the definite impression which Mr. Chamberlain had received from Herr Hitler, and communicated to the meeting, about the only possible basis on which such a peaceful solution could be followed. M. Daladier had made one remark that was possibly based on a misapprehension of the Prime Minister's account of his conversation with Herr Hitler. M. Daladier had made some reference to the impossibility of France failing to honour her obligations if Herr Hitler were to march his troops into Czechoslovakia whilst negotiations were proceeding. The more important problem, however, was to find a way to establish and keep these negotiations going. Lord Halifax and his colleagues shared the anxieties and preoccupations which M. Daladier had expressed regarding the general reaction which whatever came out of this present problem might have on the future of Europe. Herr Hitler might well have in mind projects for the future aggrandisement of Germany. All that Lord Halifax was prepared to admit. On the other hand, he was bound, as they were all bound, to face the practical realities of the situation as it now presented itself. Looking at this particular question of Czechoslovakia, we all knew—and he certainly thought their technical advisers would agree with them in this—that whatever action were taken by ourselves, by the French Government, or by the Soviet Government, at any given moment, it would be impossible to give effective protection to the Czechoslovak State. We might fight a war against German aggression, but at the Peace Conference which followed such a war he did not think that the statesmen concerned would redraft the present boundaries of Czechoslovakia. The British Government, like the French Government, had to face hard facts. They were concerned with the French Government to devise some means to save Europe from destruction and catastrophe, and with the French Government we were searching for a peaceful solution. He believed that we now had to decide whether we were prepared to consider the only condition upon which negotiations could be resumed.



Mr. Chamberlain did not propose to ask M. Daladier to reply to this question now. He suggested that the meeting should adjourn for lunch, and that this would enable the French Ministers to discuss among themselves, and if necessary give them time for consultation with their French colleagues in Paris. He would, however, add a few words. He had just returned from making his personal contact with Hitler. As a result he was convinced that it would not be the slightest use to suggest any alternative proposals. The time for that had passed. Negotiations could not be resumed except on the basis of considering ways and means to put the principle of self-determination into effect. If we would not accept this basis it meant war. Let there be no mistake about that. If the French Government had obligations to Czechoslovakia which became operative in certain circumstances, it was the right of the French Government to advise the Czechoslovak Government how to act in certain circumstances which might bring these obligations into operation. This, in his view, placed a certain duty upon the French Government. He wished, however, to make clear the view of His Majesty's Government that we did not wish to separate ourselves from the French Government, or to leave the French Government alone. If they felt that they could give certain advice to the Czechoslovak Government, we would certainly associate ourselves with it.

M. Daladier wished to make clear that in speaking of French obligations he was not merely using a vague formula. These obligations were the result of very precise facts. They arose out of the Treaty which M. Briand had signed with Czechoslovakia after Locarno. The limits to these obligations were that the French Government were bound to oppose unprovoked aggression accompanied by a violation of the Treaty between Germany and Czechoslovakia. For at the same time as France had undertaken these obligations, Germany and Czechoslovakia had signed a Treaty of Arbitration, binding them to submit any differences to an International Court. This Treaty was similar to other arbitration treaties. If, therefore, the French Government were compelled to honour their obligations it would not be as a result of any French initiative, but of an unprovoked German aggression upon Czechoslovakia in defiance of Germany's own obligations. Mr. Chamberlain had suggested that if the French Government regarded their obligations in so precise a manner and if they refused to listen to the results of his conversation with Herr Hitler, they would then be confronted with a European war.

M. Daladier had never been a fanatical partisan of the Treaty of Versailles and had made this clear during the last 20 years. But he regarded the present problem as very much less a Czechoslovak problem than a general problem involving the peace of Europe. If we were to accept the German ultimatum by conceding all her demands, we should have created a very serious precedent. Further German demands would follow in due course and Germany would conclude that we should again give way. Therefore he and his French colleagues thought the question was a less simple one than had been sug-

gested from the British side. The object of the French Ministers in coming to London was to see what could be done to preserve peace without destroying the existence of Czechoslovakia. He could not help recalling that not very long ago the British and French Governments had agreed on the principle of maintaining the unity of Czechoslovakia. He realised, however, that we must now take into account recent events. The problem therefore was to discover some means of preventing France from being forced into war as a result of her obligations and at the same time to preserve Czechoslovakia and save as much of that country as was humanly possible. He would like to know how His Majesty's Government regarded the problem as he had stated it. If they regarded the problem as simply one of saying 'yes' or 'no' to the German demand for the recognition of the right of self-determination in the form of a plebiscite, then he thought the question was badly put. In his view the problem was rather to discover what could be done as a practical measure to avoid conflict and preserve what could be preserved of a State which might have made mistakes—and what great State had not made mistakes?—but to which France was bound as an ally and whom she could not desert without committing a crime.

Mr. Chamberlain made clear that he contemplated the question he had put only as a first stage. If we were prepared to answer it in the affirmative and to resume negotiations, then many other problems would arise connected with ways and means of saving what we could of Czechoslovakia.

M. Daladier pointed out that he could not consult his colleagues who were in France, but he would consult M. Bonnet and the rest of the French Delegation. They had, in particular, to consider the news which they had just received regarding troop movements on the Czechoslovak frontier. It appeared that the Czechoslovak Government were thinking of mobilising. M. Daladier was Minister for War as well as President of the Council and it would be necessary for him to consult the French General Staff and to know exactly where we stood in this respect to avoid finding ourselves presented with a *fait accompli*. M. Daladier thought that if he found himself in a position to ask the Czechs only to mobilise in reply to a definite attack from Germany, it would then be desirable to take parallel action in Berlin and Prague to avoid provocation at this juncture.

(The meeting adjourned at 1.25 p.m.)

## SECOND MEETING, September 18, 3.30 p.m.

M. Daladier said they had received information at the French Embassy about the latest news from Prague. The position was that M. Osusky, the Czechoslovak Minister in Paris, had alluded to the possibility of a sudden German attack. He had added that the Czechoslovak Government had so far refused to mobilise, in view of the efforts for peace which were being made by His Majesty's Government and the French Government. M. Osusky had, however, represented to the French Government his own Government's

views of the gravity of the situation and of the responsibility of the French Government for the fate of Czechoslovakia, and for safeguarding the interests of France. The French Government would be required to give their early advice to the Czechoslovak Government. Meanwhile, however, the position was that there had not been mobilisation in Czechoslovakia, but that the Czechoslovak Government feared a sudden German attack.

M. Daladier said that M. Osusky had been advised in the sense of prudence and moderation, and no doubt this advice would be followed. But we should at the same time take measures to see that the guarantees which Field-Marshal Göring had given to Sir Nevile Henderson should be executed. Concessions should not be unilateral concessions from the Czechoslovak Government alone. The French Government had, after all, received further information about German troop concentrations which corresponded generally with that received by His Majesty's Government. They did not wish to be faced with a *fait accompli*.

Mr. Chamberlain explained that a telegram had been received from His Majesty's Minister at Prague,<sup>1</sup> reporting a *démarche* by a high official at the Czech Ministry for Foreign Affairs on the subject of Czechoslovak mobilisation, from which it appeared that the Czechoslovak Government would be making further enquiries in Paris and in London. No enquiries had, however, yet been received from the Czechoslovak Minister in London. Mr. Chamberlain thought it would be possible for His Majesty's Government to say to the German Government that the Czechoslovak Government had informed us of their fear of a sudden German attack, and had said they were compelled to consider mobilisation. We could add that, in reply to their request for advice, we had informed the Czechoslovak Government that, in view of the assurances received from Herr Hitler and relying upon these assurances, we had advised the Czechoslovak Government not to mobilise whilst the conversations were still proceeding. He would like to add that the same advice had been given in Prague by the French Government as by the British Government.

M. Daladier agreed. Turning to the general question, he added that he had consulted the other members of the French delegation, and that the objections which he had previously put forward to a plebiscite retained their full force. It would be almost impossible for the French Government to accept any formula on this basis.

Mr. Chamberlain suggested that perhaps some other way might be found than a formal allusion to a plebiscite.

M. Daladier explained that such a solution would be very difficult for the French Government to accept, because clearly the German object in accepting a plebiscite would not be to solve the Sudeten problem but to disintegrate Czechoslovakia, and at the same time create a precedent capable of subse-

<sup>1</sup> No. 920.

quent application elsewhere and liable to cause infinite complications throughout Europe.

Mr. Chamberlain recognised the difficulty to which M. Daladier had alluded, but if this solution were impossible he suggested there must be some other way in which a solution could be found without a conflict. There must clearly be some cession of territorial area to the Reich. But it would be very difficult for us to propose to carve up Czechoslovakia, unless the Czechoslovak Government themselves were prepared to admit the necessity for frontier rectifications. Could we not, therefore, consider the possibility of arriving at some arrangement which would be applicable only to the Sudeten areas, and contemplate a solution of the particular Sudeten problem alone without the enunciation of any general principle of self-determination which might be expected to lead eventually to the total dismemberment of Czechoslovakia?

M. Daladier agreed that it might be possible to consider some sort of cession of a part of the territories occupied by the Sudeten areas. This agreement would, however, be conditional upon the necessity of prior consultation with the Czechoslovak Government. We should have to represent to them that they must realise the difficulty of retaining the Sudeten population within the Czechoslovak State, and generally use our good offices in Prague to recommend a solution on these lines. He thought it essential to consult the Czechoslovak Government in this matter, and to avoid imposing any solution upon them from outside. Subject to these reservations, he thought that, if both the British and French Governments were to make a great effort in this sense, it should not be impossible to persuade the Czechoslovak Government to depart from the intransigent attitude they had hitherto adopted.

Mr. Chamberlain thought that, if the Czechoslovak Government themselves were satisfied that some territorial cession was necessary, they might prefer this to be accomplished on the basis of some rough-and-ready frontier delimitation, including proper arrangements to safeguard minorities and for the transfer of populations, instead of a solution by way of a plebiscite, which involved so many dangers and practical difficulties.

M. Daladier said that the Czechoslovak Government had shown very clearly on several occasions that they were absolutely opposed to a plebiscite and that they would resist such a solution by force, regardless of the results. In taking this view, they were not under any illusion that they could resist a German attack for more than one or two months. It was clear, then, that they would never accept a plebiscite because of their fear that this would destroy the Czechoslovak State. He thought, however, without being able to make a definite statement, that, if friendly pressure were brought to bear on Prague, pointing out all the difficulties and stressing the necessity of giving up some portion of Sudeten territory, the Czechoslovak Government might agree to such a proposal. On the other hand, if we were to demand so great

a sacrifice from the Czechoslovak Government, they would naturally ask in return for guarantees, particularly in respect of the independence of their country during the coming weeks.

Following this line of thought, M. Daladier pointed out that the cession of territory would leave Czechoslovakia in a very exposed position as regards her military defence. The main Czechoslovak fortifications happened to be in Sudeten territory, where a great deal of money had been spent on them. Any cession of these territories would ruin the present Czechoslovak defensive system, and Czechoslovakia could not very well construct an alternative system, at all events in the near future. M. Daladier attributed great importance to this consideration.

Mr. Chamberlain wished, before coming to the question of guarantees, to revert to the question of a plebiscite. He pointed out that the idea of territorial cession would be likely to have a much more favourable reception from the British public if it could be represented as the choice of the Czechoslovak Government themselves and it could be made clear that they had been offered the choice of a plebiscite or of territorial cession and had preferred the latter. This would dispose of any idea that we were ourselves carving up Czechoslovak territory. He felt it particularly important to show that the Czechoslovak Government had preferred cession because they were so definitely opposed to a plebiscite that they would fight rather than accept this solution.

M. Daladier agreed with this analysis of the Czechoslovak Government's point of view.

Mr. Chamberlain said that, if as a result of our friendly representation, the Czechoslovak Government were induced to accept the principle of territorial cession, accompanied by some sort of guarantee, they would naturally ask on what scale this cession was to take place. We should then have to indicate what was, in our view, the nature and extent of the areas which would have to be ceded. Herr Hitler had made it quite clear that the Prime Minister's suggestion regarding areas in which there was an 80 per cent. German majority would not suffice. Herr Hitler had claimed that the principle of self-determination should be applied to areas wherever there was a German majority and he clearly had in mind areas where over 50 per cent. of the inhabitants were Sudeten Germans. The French Government, no doubt, had maps which would show approximately what such a claim would mean.

M. Daladier said that, if he had understood aright, Herr Hitler had himself indicated that he was in favour of the transfer of populations. He must, therefore, realise that the formula of a plebiscite based upon recognition of the right of self-determination would require a certain amount of correction to meet (a) geographical, and (b) population problems. As regards (a) arrangements must be made to enable the Czechoslovak State to exist after it had been amputated of a portion of its territories. As regards (b) certain transfers of populations would be necessary. If therefore the problem was to

be treated on these lines and we were able to obtain the agreement of the Czechoslovak Government, we should have to give careful consideration to these two special considerations. He thought it necessary to point out that the problem was very complicated in both respects. In every village Sudetens and Czechs lived side by side and 15 kilom. from a village, 80 per cent. of whose inhabitants were Sudetens, might be found a village with a big Czech minority or even majority. The principle of self-determination was, therefore, very difficult to carry out in practice.

Mr. Chamberlain thought it was quite clear that it would not be possible to lay down beforehand exactly where the new frontier line should be laid down. He contemplated that if the general principle of cession were accepted the actual delimitation would be carried out by some international body who would take fully into account the difficulties to which M. Daladier had alluded. But he felt that President Benes could hardly be expected to agree to the general principle proposed unless he had some idea of the actual area which it was contemplated should be ceded. Subject to this he fully realised the difficulty of laying down definite delimitation lines. Minority enclaves exist throughout Czechoslovakia and no doubt considerable adjustments of population would be necessary. In this connexion he had understood from Herr Hitler that the latter was prepared to consider such transfers and perhaps to meet other practical difficulties as well.

M. Bonnet said that in making the proposal to the German Government which was now under consideration, it would be necessary clearly to distinguish the transfer of populations from the transfer of actual territorial areas. As regards population it could be agreed that all the Sudetens who so desired could be attached to the Reich by a transfer of populations where this was necessary. On this point Germany would receive complete satisfaction. But it would not be so easy to satisfy German territorial requirements. In delimiting the new frontiers it would be necessary to take geographical and strategic factors into account in order to make it possible that Czechoslovakia, amputated as she would have been, could defend herself. The Sudeten populations would all be able to join the Reich, but as regards territorial areas some adjustments would be necessary. He had in mind something similar to the transfers of population which had taken place between Greece and Bulgaria and Greece and Turkey, and that something similar could be done in the present case. The Czech and German anti-Nazi elements in the areas ceded to Germany could be transferred to areas remaining in Czechoslovakia whilst the inhabitants of the German enclaves remaining in Czechoslovakia could be transferred to the areas ceded to Germany.

Mr. Chamberlain thought we should be careful not to create for ourselves a problem so big that it could not be solved. The populations concerned in the Graeco-Bulgar and Graeco-Turk transfers to which M. Bonnet had alluded were, he thought, very different in character and had a much lower standard of living than those with whom we were now concerned. It was most impor-

tant that if he returned to see Herr Hitler he should not find himself in the position that Dr. Benes had agreed to the cession of a limited area whereas Herr Hitler had in mind something very much bigger. A complete *impasse* would then have been reached. If this problem were to be settled quickly, and this was the only way in which it could be settled, it was essential to make up our minds now on the guiding principle to be adopted which would of course be susceptible to adjustment later as regards practical difficulties. Herr Hitler had made it clear that he considered that the presence of a majority of Germans in any given area should be the principle guiding the right of that area to self-determination. Mr. Chamberlain therefore thought that in any communication to Dr. Benes we should warn him that the general line delimiting the areas to be ceded would have to be drawn on the basis of districts in which the Sudeten Germans were in the majority. This line would of course be subject to subsequent adjustments by the international commission, who would take into account the difficulties which M. Daladier had in mind.

M. Daladier thought that Germany wanted a plebiscite which would result in the attachment to the Reich of all communes in which a majority voted in favour of such a solution. She therefore wished to avoid any other system which would give her the Sudeten populations, but not necessarily all these territorial areas, and Germany wanted both. He therefore thought it would be fairer to decide that those Sudetens who wished to go to the Reich should be allowed to do so. But as regards the territorial areas, he thought that the International Commission should endeavour to lay down a frontier which would correspond as far as possible with the ethnical frontier, but should at the same time take into account Czechoslovak requirements in respect of defence and security.

Mr. Chamberlain said that the transfer of populations raised very difficult considerations. For example, if the inhabitants of a whole village were removed from one area to another, what was to be done with their property, or how were we to ensure for them suitable occupations in their new homes? He did not, therefore, think that it could be laid down in advance where the new frontier would be placed. In making our communication to Dr. Benes we should, however, warn him of the sort of scale of territorial cession in contemplation without tying the Czech Government or ourselves to anything precise. If Dr. Benes received such a warning, he would not have any grounds for complaint later. There still remained the question of the security of the remaining portion of the Czechoslovak State. If the problem were treated on the lines under contemplation, we would only be dealing with Sudeten minorities and would be leaving the problems of the Polish and Hungarian minorities for future negotiations between the Czechoslovakian Government and those minorities. He presumed that the French Government had in mind that the territory remaining within the Czechoslovak State should be the subject of some sort of international guarantee against aggression, and he understood that the French Government wished to enquire

whether His Majesty's Government would be prepared to enter into such a guarantee in company with other countries.

M. Daladier agreed that this was a vital question for the French Government. They could hardly bring pressure to bear on the Czechoslovak Government to agree to the cession of part of their present territory unless they could assure them of some sort of international guarantee of what remained of the Czechoslovak territory after the amputation of the Sudeten areas. He also thought that it was quite essential that Germany should be a party to this international guarantee of the neutrality of Czechoslovakia.

Mr. Chamberlain did not know what he could say about the German guarantee. He thought that Herr Hitler in a private conversation some time ago had indicated that he would be prepared to give such a guarantee if the Sudeten question were settled. He could not say whether Herr Hitler still held this view. As regards the position of the British Government, a new guarantee would be a very grave departure. It would represent a great liability and a serious source of embarrassment to His Majesty's Government, since Czechoslovakia was far away and it was not easy to see how Great Britain could fulfil such a guarantee. She had no army which could march to Czechoslovakia, and it was a long way to send an air force. He therefore had to ask himself how, in fact, Great Britain could protect and maintain the security of Czechoslovakia if one of her powerful neighbours attacked her. The value of our guarantee would be purely deterrent in indicating that the British Government were parties to a general settlement. It would, however, be a very grave decision for His Majesty's Government to take. He did not wish to exclude the possibility that they might agree to do so, but if this proposal were to be considered seriously, he thought they would wish to attach some conditions to their guarantee so as to limit its nature. He had in mind particularly the question of Czechoslovak-Soviet relations, and he would like to ask the French Government whether they would be prepared to consider that the present treaty arrangements should be modified in such a way that, having regard to the new guarantee provided, Czechoslovakia might occupy a position of neutrality somewhat similar to that taken up by Belgium.

M. Daladier agreed this would be a good formula and was in favour of guaranteeing neutrality under similar conditions to those of Belgium and Switzerland.

M. Bonnet said he would like to say a little more on the subject of guarantees, which was a vital question for the French. They would be making a very big concession in agreeing to the cession of Sudeten territory to the Reich and to the substitution of Czechoslovak neutrality for the present position in which she had definite treaties with France and the U.S.S.R. French public opinion would only be prepared to accept such sacrifices if in return Great Britain would guarantee the neutrality of Czechoslovakia, as she had done in the case of Belgium. He did not think that



Mr. Chamberlain's arguments regarding the distance of Czechoslovakia from this country were really final, since the main value of the guarantee would be moral. We were also asking Czechoslovakia to make very big sacrifices, but he thought she could only be asked to make them in return for a definite guarantee from France and Great Britain in particular. The French delegation were therefore particularly anxious to have a very positive and definite statement from His Majesty's Government on this question.

Lord Halifax recognised the importance of this question, both in its general aspects and in its bearing upon the position of the French Government. He agreed that the question must be treated as a whole. If we entered on this line of action at all, we must consider not only the possible guarantee of the boundaries of Czechoslovakia, but also the general orientation of Czechoslovakian foreign policy. In this connexion we had put certain proposals to the French Government some time ago, of which no doubt M. Daladier and M. Bonnet were aware. He thought that the best way of achieving progress would be to consider the problem on the above lines. He fully recognised the force of the French arguments regarding the necessity for a British guarantee. The French Government on their side would understand the British difficulties on this subject. He was not satisfied that the treatment proposed for this problem would altogether dispose of these difficulties and thought it might be necessary to carry the proposal a little further. As the Prime Minister had explained very briefly in his speech on the 24th March, it was quite impossible to allow the direction of British policy to be placed in the hands of any other country. This statement which was true of this country alone acquired added force from the fact that, although this was not the strict legal position, we also spoke in fact for the Dominions in undertaking any commitments. If, therefore, we were to consider the guarantees, the importance of which he fully realized, he would like to see associated with them some undertaking on the part of the Czech Government that in issues involving peace and war they should accept the advice of His Majesty's Government, and that if they did not accept it His Majesty's Government would then be automatically absolved of their guarantee. Subject to these considerations, he agreed with the Prime Minister that he would not exclude the possibility of such a guarantee. If, therefore, he were satisfied on the points he had raised, he would not feel called upon to resist such a proposal.

Mr. Chamberlain said that M. Bonnet had stated that some guarantee of Czechoslovak neutrality after a settlement of the Sudeten question was a capital point of the view of the French Government. He had added that the French delegation would wish to go back to France with some definite understanding on this point. This was a very serious question for the British Government and he and his colleagues would therefore like to retire to discuss it.

M. Daladier said that he would first like to mention a consideration of a technical rather than a political character. In considering the Czechoslovak

question it must be remembered that small though Czechoslovakia was the Czechoslovak Alliance was very important to France. Throughout the centuries since the days of the Romans, France had been confronted with the solid mass of German population across the Rhine and she had always had to look for possible means of action in the East to safeguard her from attack by the whole mass of the German population to the West. He would speak quite frankly, and say that throughout the centuries, French policy had been directed to keeping Germany occupied in the East in order to prevent a German attack upon France. It was all the more necessary now when the French population was only just over half of the population of Germany. For this reason the existence of the Czechoslovak State in its present form was a very important element in French security. However weak Czechoslovakia might be numerically, her geographical position was very important, and through the Czechoslovak Alliance France could attack Germany. If the French were to agree to the proposals now under consideration for the establishment of Czechoslovak neutrality, France would lose an important element in her security just as she had lost an even more important element through the neutralisation of Belgium. If Belgium had not become neutral and had remained faithful to her League obligations, and in particular to article 16, the problem of rendering French assistance to Czechoslovakia would have been a very simple one. Military operations against Germany could have been embarked upon with ease in agreement with Belgium. He did not wish to criticise the policy of the Belgian Government, but only to point out that it had resulted in depriving France of a capital element in her security. The neutralisation of Czechoslovakia would have a similar effect. He therefore wished to explain quite briefly but simply the military disadvantages involved. He would also like to refer to the policy of Poland, which he hoped would prove favourable to the true interests of Poland, though he doubted very much whether this would be found to be the case in two or three years' time. Since an essential element in French security would disappear with the neutralisation of Czechoslovakia, an international guarantee, and particularly the guarantee of the French and British, and possibly of other Governments, was clearly required by France. The British Empire was in a rather different geographical position and he would very much prefer France to be in the same position. Great Britain was not faced on her frontiers by a neighbour who had shown herself not only military but militaristic through history. If we were to concede so many advantages to Germany, some guarantee for Czechoslovak neutrality was essential. If the situation remained as it was in these regions of Central Europe without any international guarantee, he did not see how he or, indeed, the head of any French Government could agree to the weakening of French security by the neutralisation of Czechoslovakia. This he regarded as a vital point.

Mr. Chamberlain said he had tried to follow M. Daladier's arguments, but he must confess that they had puzzled him. The engagements between France and Czechoslovakia were, after all, mutual, and although Czecho-

slovakia might be a potential asset she was also a potential liability, as the present situation clearly indicated. Czechoslovakia was now causing France considerable preoccupation. He could not understand why a guarantee of Czechoslovakia by this country should be an essential element in French security, as he did not see how this could prevent a German attack upon France. On the contrary, it seemed to him that France might gain if she were released from liabilities assumed in quite different circumstances before the 'Anschluss' of Austria, and at a time when conditions in the U.S.S.R. were very different. He could not, therefore, see how the neutralisation of Czechoslovakia would diminish French security. In expressing these doubts he was not arguing against the principle of neutralisation. He merely wished to make it clear that, in his view, the British guarantee of Czechoslovak neutrality would help Czechoslovakia rather than France.

M. Daladier explained that from the purely political point of view Czechoslovakia might represent a liability to France. From the military point of view and that of the General Staff the Czechoslovak Alliance presented several considerable advantages for France. From the map it could be seen that Berlin was nearer to the Czechoslovak frontier than Paris was to the German frontier. In any military operations there would, therefore, be great possibilities of attacking Germany through Czechoslovakian territory. He would be quite frank. He would explain that measures had already been taken in the event of a German attack on Czechoslovakia immediately to despatch French air squadrons to that country, whence they could menace Berlin from closer range than Paris could be menaced from Germany. He also referred to the important industrial regions of Saxony, which were much nearer to Czechoslovakia than the corresponding French industrial regions in the north were to the German frontier. He thought these geographical and military arguments could not possibly be denied.

The Prime Minister had said that he did not understand how a British guarantee of Czechoslovakian neutrality could increase French security. On the contrary, M. Daladier thought it would have a very great effect. If he were certain that Herr Hitler were speaking the truth when he repeated the usual Nazi propaganda record to the effect that nothing more was wanted than the Sudeten Germans and that German aims stopped there, then he would not insist upon a British guarantee. But he was convinced in his heart that Germany was aiming at something far greater. It was clear from 'Mein Kampf' that Herr Hitler did not regard himself in the light of a second Emperor William II, but that he was rather aiming at dominating Europe as Napoleon had done. He was a popular chief, with something of the religious authority of Mahomet. A British guarantee for Czechoslovakia would therefore help France in the sense that it would help to stop the German march to the East. If they were to accept the proposals now under consideration France would lose a very great deal and particularly from a military point of view, for, as he had explained, it was easier to attack Germany from Czechoslovakia than from France.

Mr. Chamberlain thanked M. Daladier for his explanation, which made the latter's views quite clear to him. He suggested that the meeting should now adjourn to enable the British Ministers to consider the question of a guarantee.

(The meeting adjourned at 5 p.m. and was resumed at 7.30 p.m.)

Mr. Chamberlain explained that he and his colleagues had thought it best, in order to facilitate procedure, to formulate a draft in the form of a joint message to the Czechoslovak Government which the French Ministers might consider over dinner. He suggested that they should resume their conversations and consider the observations which the French Ministers might wish to make on this draft. He would like, however, to say now that, after discussing the matter very carefully with the other members of the British delegation, they had agreed that, in view of the great changes which were contemplated in the position of Czechoslovakia and in that of France, they must give the assurances for which the French Government had asked. The French Government would therefore find in the draft circulated to the meeting a provision that, if the Czechoslovak Government accepted the proposals now being put to them and provided no military *coup* had taken place meanwhile, His Majesty's Government were prepared to join in the suggested guarantee.

M. Daladier thanked the Prime Minister for his statement and said that, as the British Ministers had understood the great sacrifices France would be making in agreeing to the territorial concessions contemplated, the French Ministers, on their side, fully understood the importance of the Prime Minister's statement. He would, of course, have to discuss the matter with the other members of the French delegation, but would like at this stage to pay a tribute to the spirit in which His Majesty's Government had made this proposal. He agreed to the Prime Minister's proposal that the meeting should be adjourned and continued after dinner.

(The meeting then adjourned at 7.45 p.m.)

### THIRD MEETING, September 18, 10.30 p.m.

M. Daladier said that the French Delegation had examined the draft telegram communicated to them. It was certainly very distressing, in view of France's very close relations with a friendly country, to whom she was bound by treaty, for them to be obliged to examine a solution which would certainly give rise to strong feeling in Czechoslovakia and in France. But they had to consider the interests of European peace and, as had been pointed out in the draft itself, they had to consider the interests of Czechoslovakia at this decisive moment in the history of Europe. As regards the general sense of the telegram, he therefore felt it was his duty in these painful circumstances to agree, and he would defend his attitude before the French Government to-morrow. He wished, however, to propose certain modifications in detail

which would take these preoccupations into account by softening the tone of the telegram, thus rendering the message more acceptable to the Czechoslovak Government. He would ask M. Bonnet to explain these amendments in detail.

M. Bonnet then read the proposed French text incorporating the amendments desired by the French Delegation and a general discussion ensued. The British text of the draft as finally agreed is attached as Annex A.

N.B.—The French delegation had desired to add a paragraph envisaging the possibility of certain economic assistance for Czechoslovakia, but the British delegation thought this might encourage the Czechoslovak Government to delay their general reply on the pretext of obtaining further details regarding these economic measures. It was agreed accordingly to omit this paragraph.

Mr. Chamberlain raised the question of future procedure and the timetable to be followed. He wished to ask whether the telegram as now approved could be sent off to the British and French Ministers in Prague to-night.

M. Daladier did not think this would be possible. The policy laid down in the draft involved an important departure from previous French policy and possibly changes in French treaties. Some of his colleagues in the Government might not be in general agreement. The French delegation had come to London to listen rather than to reach important decisions, and he considered it necessary to obtain the approval of the French Council of Ministers, which could be done early on the morning of the 19th September.

Mr. Chamberlain emphasised the urgency of taking early action. The situation was acute; time was going by and delay might be extremely dangerous. We should be running a very big risk if he were compelled to postpone his meeting with Herr Hitler beyond Wednesday, the 21st September. The British Ministers had also taken decisions without consulting their colleagues. He was frankly afraid of delay in Paris and would like to know whether there was any doubt about the nature of the final French reply.

M. Daladier undertook that he would insist upon a definite decision 'Yes' or 'No' from his Council of Ministers. There would be no discussion of drafting amendments. He would therefore be able to let the Prime Minister have his reply by midday. Meanwhile, the agreed draft might be telegraphed to Prague and the British and French Ministers could make their *démarche* by lunch-time to-morrow on receipt of a telephone message.

Some discussion then took place on the terms of the communiqué, the final agreed version of which is attached as Annex 'B'.

Mr. Chamberlain had one last question to ask. What would be the position if Dr. Benes said 'No' in reply to our representations?

M. Daladier did not think such a reply would be possible. If Dr. Benes

did reply in the negative, he would then be accepting the idea of a war. If that situation arose, the question would have to be discussed at the Council of Ministers. In that event the present proposals for settling the Sudeten question would fall through and the Franco-Czechoslovak Treaty of Assistance would come into force.

Mr. Chamberlain asked M. Daladier whether he contemplated that it might be left to M. Benes to take a decision which would certainly involve France and might perhaps also involve this country in war, after he had refused to take the advice which had been given to him.

M. Daladier replied that the strongest pressure would have to be brought to bear on Dr. Benes to see that the Czechoslovak Government accepted the solution proposed by the French and British Governments.

Mr. Chamberlain had thought it necessary to raise this point, but he did not wish to press it further, and he hoped that it would not in fact arise.

M. Daladier agreed that it seemed difficult to leave it to Dr. Benes to decide on this issue of war or peace.

Mr. Chamberlain suggested that it was extremely important to keep these conversations entirely secret in view of the possible effect upon Herr Hitler if he were to receive any impression of what had transpired through press indiscretions.

M. Daladier entirely agreed.

It was agreed that no statement should be issued to the press by either side in addition to the press communiqué.

M. Bonnet suggested that it might be useful to indicate to Herr Hitler at once, i.e., as soon as possible after this meeting, that Mr. Chamberlain now intended to make his second journey to Germany to meet Herr Hitler again.

Mr. Chamberlain thought he could send a message to Herr Hitler saying that he now hoped to come to Germany, but he thought it would be preferable to await a reply from Prague to our representations before definitely committing himself on this subject.

Mr. Chamberlain, in conclusion, expressed his great pleasure that it had been possible to reach agreement at this meeting. He had noticed that these meetings made it easier to arrive at agreement between the two and he hoped that the results which had been reached would turn out to be satisfactory to both Governments.

M. Daladier thanked the Prime Minister for his kind words, and expressed the hope that there would be a successful issue arising out of Mr. Chamberlain's initiative in making his journey to Berchtesgaden.

(The proceedings were then closed at 12.15 a.m.)

ANNEX A

*Cypher telegram to Mr. Newton (Prague)*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The text of this telegram is given in No. 937 below.

ANNEX B

*Agreed Communiqué*

After full discussion of the present international situation the representatives of the British and French Governments are in complete agreement as to the policy to be adopted with a view to promoting a peaceful solution of the Czechoslovak question.

The two Governments hope that thereafter it will be possible to consider a more general settlement in the interests of European peace.

No. 929

*The Czechoslovak Minister to Viscount Halifax*

[C 10327/1941/18]

THE CZECHOSLOVAK MINISTER,  
9 GROSVENOR PLACE, S.W. 1,  
September 18, 3.45 p.m.

My dear Lord Halifax,

I have just been instructed by my Government to inform you and through you the Prime Minister, that my Government takes for granted, that no decision will be taken without their being previously consulted. They could not take any responsibility for decisions made without them.

Very sincerely yours,  
JAN MASARYK

No. 930

*Note by Mr. Mallet*

[C 10107/1941/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 18, 1938

The Embassy in Berlin have just telephoned to tell me that the State Secretary at the Wilhelmstrasse has informed them that no record of the conversation between the Prime Minister and Herr Hitler will be communicated to us. It was stated that, in view of difficulties which had arisen in securing an agreed record of the conversation between the Secretary of State and Herr von Ribbentrop in March the German Government had decided some months ago not to communicate to His Majesty's Government any record of any such conversations as might be held in future.

The Embassy pointed out that the record which Sir N. Henderson referred to in his telegram No. 464<sup>1</sup> reporting his conversation with General Göring was apparently not Schmidt's record but a record prepared (possibly from Schmidt's notes) by General Bodenschatz, Göring's A.D.C. at Berchtesgaden. The Embassy pointed out that in view of this development it would be necessary for us to have our own interpreter or to make our own record of any future conversations.

The Embassy have since telephoned again to state that a further message has been received from Herr von Weizsäcker, to the effect that Herr Hitler believed that the Prime Minister had fully understood everything that had been said but that if this was not the case he was quite prepared to repeat it.

I. MALLEY

<sup>1</sup> No. 910.

No. 931

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*  
*No. 383 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10107/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 18, 1938, 7.55 p.m.

Your telephone message about the record of the conversation.<sup>1</sup>

You should at once see Weizsäcker and tell him that we feel most reluctant to convey to the Prime Minister the intimation he made to you, for you are convinced that he will most properly resent it. We naturally assumed that we should receive a copy; otherwise we should have provided an interpreter of our own. Moreover, before the Prime Minister and his advisers left Berchtesgaden the latter asked members of the German Delegation how soon the record would be available, and the only point raised by the Germans was that Herr Hitler must first see it. Otherwise, it is certain that the Prime Minister would have made the strongest possible protest against the line that it is now proposed to take. We had had no intimation of the decision that is now said to have been arrived at as a result of the discussions last March. In any event, that is not in any sense a justification for the attitude now adopted.

<sup>1</sup> No. 930.

No. 932

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 18, 6.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 635 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10016/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 18, 1938

An official communiqué published today states that the Government decided on September 17 to take extraordinary measures applicable to the whole State territory for a period of three months. Certain civil rights



guaranteed under the Constitution were thereby suspended or limited; in particular, the freedom of house and person and the secrecy of the post, the right of assembly and the freedom of the press. Further measures could be taken by the provincial authorities. This decree entered into force on September 17.

Press comments state that these measures are based on a law of 1920 which authorises special measures in time of war or when events take place within the State or on its frontiers which threaten its integrity, its democratic and republican form, the constitution, or public peace and order. The measures contemplated in the law modify the right of *habeas corpus*; empower the police to exclude persons from a district or to confine them to a district and give them the right of house search without a legal warrant in the case of a number of offences. Letters can be opened or confiscated, associations dissolved, newspapers submitted to censorship before publication and if necessary suspended.

These extraordinary measures must be submitted to Parliament or the permanent Parliamentary Committee for approval within fourteen days.

Repeated to Berlin.

#### No. 933

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 18, 8.20 p.m.)

No. 478 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10058/1941/18]

BERLIN, September 18, 1938

Your telegram No. 382.<sup>1</sup>

I have informed Secretary of State.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No. 926.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. Baron von Weizsäcker.

#### No. 934

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 18, 11.30 p.m.)

No. 637 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10018/1941/18]

PRAGUE, September 18, 1938

Speaking over the Czech wireless this morning September 18 the President of the Council made the following points:

(1) Czechoslovakia's primary task was and always had been to settle her relations with the German people both in the Reich and in Czechoslovakia. When at last there had been found a basis for agreement agreeable to both sides everything was upset by a revolt.

(2) Objection had been taken to the provision with which the Czech

Government had dealt with the revolt, but they had only fulfilled their clear duty after long forbearance.

(3) Their policy during the last few months had shown them to have laboured faithfully for peace. Czechoslovakia had fulfilled her duty. It was now for others [? to do] likewise.

(4) A plebiscite could in no circumstances bring a peaceful solution. If it had been practicable it would have been used by the Peace Conference but it would only create further problems.

(5) Despite recent events the Government in no way modified their policy of understanding with the nationalities and especially with the Sudeten Germans, namely, of defending the full integrity of the State and conducting negotiations on the basis of their last proposal. Henlein and the fugitive leaders were not necessary for this purpose, for events had shown that the Government had before it masses of the Sudeten German people whose overwhelming majority desired a peaceful settlement.

(6) The Government would not pursue a policy of vengeance or persecution but law and order must be preserved for without it there would never be a full and reasonable agreement.

(7) The world had long witnessed the endeavour to strike at the heart of the country by creating a threat at home and the impression abroad that Czechoslovakia could not hold her national groups together. Realising that many of the regional and nationalities questions were still unsolved, the Government produced their proposals to settle them. But this had had no effect on the other side.

(8) Since the beginning of the jubilee year<sup>1</sup> intrigue had dogged the Republic. Even some of the Slovaks and Ruthenians wavered. A systematic attack had been launched against the country. He thanked his hearers for their calmness in the face of hostile propaganda and agitation. Government, army and citizens were united and the greater the pressure the firmer would be their unity. No one could dream of peace who was incapable of fighting.

<sup>1</sup> i.e. since 1928, the tenth anniversary of the foundation of the Republic.

## No. 935

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 299 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10026/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 19, 1938, 1.0 a.m.*

You should take no action on my immediately following telegram<sup>1</sup> pending further instructions.<sup>2</sup>

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 937.

<sup>2</sup> It has not been possible in the sequence of telegrams to trace any instructions to Mr. Newton to take action on No. 937. These instructions would appear to have been sent before the despatch of No. 946.

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 19, 9.30 a.m.)  
No. 640 Telegraphic [C 10077/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 19, 1938, 2.30 a.m.

My telegram No. 487 Saving.<sup>1</sup>

Herr Kundt called on Mr. Stopford yesterday.<sup>2</sup> Whilst clearly disapproving of line taken by Henlein group he emphasized that there was no split in Sudeten German party and that while awaiting result of Chamberlain-Hitler conversations he hoped ultimately to be the channel for securing peaceful transfer to Germany. He was obviously anxious to stand well with the Reich. He also denied that any Sudeten party leader would join a new middle party or that any considerable body of Sudetens was going over to the Government. (This seems adequate comment on my telegram No. 636.<sup>3</sup>)

He said that if further disturbances were to be avoided he and other Sudeten deputies should retain their parliamentary mandates to enable them to safeguard . . .<sup>4</sup> people. Without mentioning Herr Kundt I have pointed out to Ministry of Foreign Affairs that as the Government had taken action against extreme elements it might be wise for them to leave a moderate leader who was trusted by his people and with whom they could negotiate.

Repeated to Berlin Saving.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. In this telegram Mr. Newton reported that the parliamentary session closed on September 16, and that during the recess the place of parliament was taken by a permanent parliamentary committee. According to the semi-official 'Prager Presse' the committee would meet on September 19 to approve the Government's decision dissolving the Sudeten German party; it would then approve the law for the dissolution of political parties which had lapsed in January, whereupon the Sudeten German party deputies would automatically lose their parliamentary mandates.

<sup>2</sup> This telegram appears to have been drafted before midnight on September 18-19. It is probable, however, that 'yesterday' means September 18.

<sup>3</sup> Not printed. This telegram of September 18 gave the substance of a manifesto to the Sudeten German public by Herr Jaksch, leader of the Sudeten German Social Democrats, calling on all peace-loving Sudetens to abandon the 'party monopoly' and form a national council to resume negotiations on the basis of the 'Fourth Plan'.

<sup>4</sup> The text is here uncertain.

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)  
No. 300 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10026/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 19, 1938, 2.45 a.m.

Representatives of French and British Governments, after consultation in London, are agreed to address the following message to President Benes, begins:

1. The representatives of the French and British Governments have been in consultation today on the general situation, and have considered the British Prime Minister's report of his conversation with Herr Hitler. British

Ministers also placed before their French colleagues their conclusions derived from the account furnished to them of the work of his Mission by Lord Runciman. We are both convinced that, after recent events, the point has now been reached where the further maintenance within the boundaries of the Czechoslovak State of the districts mainly inhabited by Sudeten-Deutsch cannot in fact continue any longer without imperilling the interests of Czechoslovakia herself and of European peace. In the light of these considerations both Governments have been compelled to the conclusion that the maintenance of peace and the safety of Czechoslovakia's vital interests cannot effectively be assured unless these areas are now transferred to the Reich.

2. This could be done either by direct transfer or as the result of a plebiscite. We realise the difficulties involved in a plebiscite, and we are aware of your objections already expressed to this course, particularly the possibility of far-reaching repercussions if the matter were treated on the basis of so wide a principle. For this reason we anticipate in the absence of indication to the contrary that you may prefer to deal with the Sudeten-Deutsch problem by the method of direct transfer, and as a case by itself.

3. The areas for transfer would probably have to include areas with over 50 per cent. of German inhabitants, but we should hope to arrange by negotiations provisions for adjustment of frontiers, where circumstances render it necessary, by some international body including a Czech representative. We are satisfied that the transfer of smaller areas based on a higher percentage would not meet the case.

4. The international body referred to might also be charged with questions of possible exchange of population on the basis of right to opt within some specified time limit.

5. We recognise that if the Czechoslovak Government is prepared to concur in the measures proposed, involving material changes in the conditions of the State, they are entitled to ask for some assurance of their future security.

6. Accordingly His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom would be prepared, as a contribution to the pacification of Europe, to join in an international guarantee of the new boundaries of the Czechoslovak State against unprovoked aggression. One of the principal conditions of such a guarantee would be the safeguarding of the independence of Czechoslovakia by the substitution of a general guarantee against unprovoked aggression in place of existing treaties which involve reciprocal obligations of a military character.

7. Both the French and British Governments recognise how great is the sacrifice thus required of the Czechoslovak Government in the cause of peace. But because that cause is common both to Europe in general and in particular to Czechoslovakia herself, they have felt it their duty jointly to set forth frankly the conditions essential to secure it.

8. The Prime Minister must resume conversation with Herr Hitler not later than Wednesday,<sup>1</sup> and earlier if possible. We therefore feel we must ask for your reply at earliest possible moment. Ends.

<sup>1</sup> i.e. September 21.

Please concert immediately with your French colleague and arrange joint audience of President in order to present to him the above joint message.

You should impress upon him the need of secrecy.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Paragraphs 1-8 of this telegram were repeated on September 22 to H.M. Representatives at Warsaw and Budapest, for their own strictly secret information. See Volume III of this Series, Chapter I.

#### No. 938

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 302 Telegraphic: [? by telephone] [C 10026/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 19, 1938, 11.30 a.m.*

My telegrams Nos. 299<sup>1</sup> and 300.<sup>2</sup>

I wish to emphasize again the urgent need for a reply from President Benes tonight or tomorrow. The Prime Minister's visit to Herr Hitler cannot be postponed beyond Wednesday, and he would be in a most difficult position, and indeed it might be disastrous, if he should have to go without any answer from Prague.

Repeated to Berlin No. 388 and Paris No. 291.

<sup>1</sup> No. 935.

<sup>2</sup> No. 937.

#### No. 939

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 386 Telegraphic: [? by telephone] [C 10164/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 19, 1938, 11.30 a.m.*

Please at once convey following message from Prime Minister to the Führer:—

I have now got so far with my consultations that I anticipate that it will be possible to resume my conversation with Your Excellency on Wednesday September 21.

If Your Excellency will inform me whether this date will be convenient to yourself I hope to be able to confirm the appointment definitely.

#### No. 940

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 19, 11.40 a.m.)*

*No. 641 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10081/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, *September 19, 1938*

Your telegram No. 300.<sup>1</sup>

The terms of guarantee offered in paragraph 6 which [*sic*] seem to exclude and even provide against subsequent adjustments in favour of other minorities notably Hungarian and Polish.

<sup>1</sup> No. 937.

In presenting message should we not make necessary reservations in respect of other nationalities? We might for example state verbally but preferably in writing that our whole communication is without prejudice to the treatment of the problem of other National Minorities.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

No. 941

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 301 Telegraphic: [? by telephone] [C 10026/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 19, 1938, 12.10 p.m.*

My telegram No. 300.<sup>1</sup>

1. I send for your guidance following note on what passed between the Prime Minister and Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden.

2. It was at once apparent to the Prime Minister that the situation was much more urgent and critical even than he had supposed when he had undertaken his mission to Germany.

3. He was satisfied that Herr Hitler would not accept any solution falling short of the incorporation of the Sudeten Germans in the Reich, and that he was prepared to face any risk, even risk of a world war, to obtain an immediate settlement of the question on these lines. At the same time Herr Hitler seemed ready, in the event of a transfer of territory being agreed to in principle, to contemplate the working out of conditions under which it could be peaceably and equitably carried out, including arrangements for the exchange of populations.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 937.

No. 942

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 19, 12.45 p.m.)*  
*No. 483 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10100/1941/18]*

BERLIN, *September 19, 1938*

Public opinion under the influence of press reports seems now convinced that England and France will agree to plebiscite but that the Czechs will resist.

In the circumstances fear and dislike of war have almost disappeared. Indeed in some circles prospect of punitive expedition against the Czechs seems to be looked forward to with pleasurable anticipation.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 19, 2.30 p.m.)  
*No. 479 Telegraphic [C 10131/65/18]*

BERLIN, September 19, 1938, 1.12 p.m.

Military Attaché returned last night from manoeuvres in East Prussia. With the exception of Czech Military Attachés and several assistant Military Attachés all the Military Attachés in Berlin were present. General Beck attended the last two days and has now returned to Berlin. General opinion is that he will be retiring in normal course of events in November when half yearly promotions take place. It is believed that his successor is already taking over in Berlin. General Beck shows marked signs of strain. Colonel-in-Chief arrived in East Prussia yesterday for First Corps manoeuvres to be attended by foreign military missions which arrive today. All officers of Attaché group except one and Chief Intelligence and several officers of German Intelligence Directorate have remained in East Prussia and do not return to Berlin till end of this week.

German officers and Military Attachés completely surprised by Prime Minister's visit to Berchtesgaden but on the whole greatly welcomed the move. On the other hand German officers unanimously furious with Czechoslovak Government for its latest actions and demand that the situation be dealt with immediately. East Prussian press welcomed the Berchtesgaden visit but rabid in tone against Czechs. German officers fear good effect of Prime Minister's action will be entirely lost if any delay in dealing with Sudeten situation occurs. They were in notably good but excited spirits and Military Attaché gained the impression that they feel neither England nor France will be prepared to support the Czechs after M. Benes' recent moves. Several Junkers and other civilians met by Military Attaché stated that tension in East Prussia was greater than in July 1914.

Divisions in East Prussia contain practically no reservists and were not at war strength as regards transport and rear services but at least one and probably two complete reserve infantry regimental groups are now training at Stablack and Arys. Scale of armament of troops in East Prussia is considerably below the average of the Reich. Only artillery with latest type of weapons are mechanized heavy units. Infantry have no mortars at all and in most cases old type of machine guns. Military Attaché was much impressed by standard of individual training achieved and in most cases by work of units but collective performance made distinctly bad impression. Only tank unit present contained no medium tank and was particularly badly handled. Practically no air force took part.

Please inform War Office.

No. 944

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 19, 1.25 p.m.)*  
*No. 261 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10106/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 19, 1938

A Ministerial Council was held at 11 a.m.

The following communiqué was issued at 12.30 p.m.

MM. Daladier and Bonnet gave to the Council an account of their negotiations in London and of the conditions in which agreement had been reached with the British Government. The Council unanimously approved the declarations and attitude of M. Daladier and the solution proposed in agreement with the British Government.

No. 945

*Note by Mr. Strang*  
*[C 10164/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 19, 1938

On Sir A. Cadogan's instructions I telephoned the following message to Sir N. Henderson at 1.45 p.m. today:—

'You may say from the Prime Minister that he learns that Czech reply will be available early this afternoon. He has arranged to consider it immediately with his principal colleagues and expects to be able to suggest later in the afternoon a time for his meeting with the German Chancellor.'

W. STRANG

No. 946

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 303 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10081/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 19, 1938, 2.15 p.m.

Your telegram No. 641.<sup>1</sup>

1. Guarantee offered by us in paragraph 6 of joint Anglo-French communication to President Benes is against *unprovoked aggression*; but does not prejudice the treatment of the other minorities problems, except to say that that treatment must not be by way of unprovoked aggression.<sup>2</sup>

2. I am suggesting to French Government that French Minister in Prague be instructed to make, simultaneously with you, written communication in this sense to President Benes. You should therefore give time for your French colleague to receive instructions, but if for any reason you judge it necessary to act ahead of him, you have authority to do so.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 940.

<sup>2</sup> On September 21, H.M. Representatives at Warsaw and Budapest were informed that this interpretation might be used if necessary with the Polish and Hungarian Governments. See Volume III of this Series, Chapter I.



No. 947

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*  
*No. 293 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10081/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 19, 1938, 2.20 p.m.*

My telegram to Prague No. 303.<sup>1</sup>

Please urge M. Bonnet to send necessary instructions to French Minister in Prague without delay.

Repeated to Prague and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 946.

No. 948

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 305 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10026/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 19, 1938, 2.25 p.m.*

My telegram No. 300,<sup>1</sup> paragraph 8.

Word 'must' was employed to indicate that in view of Prime Minister situation was so critical that it would brook no delay. It does *not* mean that Herr Hitler indicated any time limit.

<sup>1</sup> No. 937.

No. 949

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 19, 4.30 p.m.)*  
*No. 486 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10117/1941/18]*

BERLIN, *September 19, 1938*

I telephoned to Field-Marshal Göring to acquaint him personally of proposal for the renewal of conversations between the Prime Minister and the Chancellor and took this opportunity to protest in strongest terms about Herr von Ribbentrop's attitude in respect of the communiqué of the conversation at Berchtesgaden.<sup>1</sup>

Field-Marshal Göring told me he had been informed of the matter and that it had now been satisfactorily arranged. Record would he said be communicated and he gave me very unconvincing explanation of Herr von Ribbentrop's reasons for [? refus]ing it. Incidentally Baron von Neurath told me confidentially at lunch that the Field-Marshal had spoken seriously to Herr Hitler on the subject of Herr von Ribbentrop.

<sup>1</sup> See No. 930.

No. 950

*Note by Mr. Strang*  
[C 10164/1941/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 19, 1938*

I telephoned to Sir Nevile Henderson at 4.45 this afternoon the following information received by Mr. Harvey from No. 10 Downing Street.

The Prime Minister wished Sir Nevile Henderson to thank the Führer for the message<sup>1</sup> which the latter had sent earlier in the afternoon. The Prime Minister would confirm the date of his arrival at Godesberg as soon as he could, but did not anticipate that it would be possible for him to do so in time for any announcement to be made this evening.

For the same reason it was not possible to settle the terms of the joint communiqué just yet.

The Prime Minister was content to leave it to Sir Nevile Henderson to make arrangements as regards hotel accommodation.

W. STRANG

<sup>1</sup> Sir N. Henderson had telephoned at 2.45 p.m. a message from Herr Hitler, in reply to No. 939, suggesting Godesberg as a meeting-place.

No. 951

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 19, 8.25 p.m.)*  
*No. 643 Telegraphic [C 10118/4786/18]*

PRAGUE, *September 19, 1938, 5.25 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 297.<sup>1</sup>

My French colleague was not in a position to act until this morning September 19. As arranged with Sir A. Cadogan on the telephone last night, as soon as M. de Lacroix had made a communication today in the sense of your telegram I informed Minister for Foreign Affairs that His Majesty's Government associated themselves with advice given by French Government.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 927.

No. 952

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 19, 8.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 644 Telegraphic [C 10119/4786/18]*

PRAGUE, *September 19, 1938, 6.10 p.m.*

Military Attaché visited General Staff this morning and was informed of conditions of settlement by Colonel Ha . . .<sup>1</sup> who had already received them

<sup>1</sup> This name is uncertain.

from London. Colonel Stronge was told that in view of fact that Czechoslovakia was being betrayed by France and abandoned by Britain, it would be suicidal to fight Germany single-handed. For that reason it was not proposed to resist. Colonel Ha . . . said that while it could not be foreseen how country would take decision, army was disciplined and would not split on the issue. Every officer—major-general and soldier [*sic*—would obey orders of Chief of the General Staff.

Military Attaché credits opinion that while army would certainly have defended their country in company with the Allies, decision not to do so alone has only been taken in the last few days when probability of what has occurred, hitherto considered as incredible, came to be realised for the first time.

I have informed my French colleague in strictest confidence. He had been afraid there might be an immediate mobilisation.

Please inform War Office.

#### No. 953

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 19, 6.40 p.m.)*  
*No. 649 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10124/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 19, 1938

Your telegram No. 303.<sup>1</sup>

To have made a reservation at the time would have been one thing but I would strongly deprecate raising such a point now the Czechoslovak Government have just been given a very bitter pill to swallow and their acceptance might well be prejudiced by such a further communication at this precise moment.

If I am asked for a clarification of our guarantee I will of course explain it on the lines of your telegram under reference.

<sup>1</sup> No. 946.

#### No. 954

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 19, 6.50 p.m.)*  
*No. 262 Telegraphic [C 10127/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 19, 1938, 5.45 p.m.

Your telegram No. 293.<sup>1</sup>

Minister for Foreign Affairs promises to instruct French Minister at Prague accordingly.

Repeated to Prague and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 947.

No. 955

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 19, 7.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 263 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10128/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 19, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

Ministry of Foreign Affairs now tell me M. Bonnet prefers that this communication to M. Benes should be made only by British Minister, as paragraph 6 of joint note to M. Benes refers specifically to British guarantee.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs point out that this does not in the least imply that French in any way disagree with us on the point or that they will not adopt the same attitude as ours eventually. They merely feel that it would be inopportune . . .<sup>2</sup> raise the question at present stage.

Repeated to Berlin and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 954.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

No. 956

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 19, 7.30 p.m.)*  
*No. 646 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10121/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 19, 1938

Your telegram No. 300.<sup>1</sup>

Joint communication made at 2 p.m. today report follows.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No. 937.

<sup>2</sup> See No. 961.

No. 957

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 19)<sup>1</sup>*  
*No. 487 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10133/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 19, 1938

Baron von Neurath lunched with me today. In his opinion situation in Germany itself had become easier since Nuremberg and of course since Prime Minister's flight to Berchtesgaden.

He spoke appreciatively of French attitude where he said public opinion was more averse to war than in England.

I asked him whether he believed Czechoslovakia would fight rather than accept self-determination. He thought it probable M. Benes would resign rather than accept because he had to prove to his people that he was constrained by *force majeure*. Otherwise he would risk being murdered by the Czechs themselves.

My own view is that the more definite our language at Prague as regards futility and danger of resistance the kinder it will be to the Czechs themselves and the greater the possibility of truly peaceful solution.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> The hour of receipt of this telegram is not recorded.

No. 958

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 19, 7.35 p.m.)

No. 488 *Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10177/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 19, 1938

Press messages from London assert that preparations are being made for meeting on Wednesday and despite provisional character of the message in your telegram No. 386<sup>1</sup> Germans are proceeding on the assumption that meeting will in fact take place on Wednesday.

Meanwhile Henlein's Free Corps is being formed, troop movements are being made and we may at any moment be faced by a serious incident.

I note from your telegram No. 388<sup>2</sup> that you have decided that Prime Minister's visit cannot be postponed beyond Wednesday. Delay is indeed dangerous especially as M. Benes' reply is likely to be unfavourable or at least postponed again until too late. In the circumstances therefore I would urge an immediate notification to the German Government. If Chancellor thinks meeting is being postponed for reasons not clear to him, he may well decide to act without further ado. Factors operating against us are

- (1) evident unwillingness of France to fight,
- (2) impatience of Sudetens at non-appearance of German help,
- (3) Signor Mussolini's support,<sup>3</sup>
- (4) improvement in national morale, to which I drew attention in my telegram No. 483.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No. 939.

<sup>2</sup> No. 938.

<sup>3</sup> In a speech at Trieste on September 18 Signor Mussolini, referring to Czechoslovakia, had said that the only solution was plebiscites for all the nationalities who demanded them.

<sup>4</sup> No. 942.

No. 959

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 19, 10.50 p.m.)*  
No. 648 *Telegraphic [C 10123/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 19, 1938, 7.35 p.m.

My telegram No. 644.<sup>1</sup>

Nature of decision taken in London on Sunday appears to have been well known in Prague early this morning<sup>2</sup> and will doubtless be equally well known

<sup>1</sup> No. 952.

<sup>2</sup> Sir E. Phipps had previously reported (telegrams Nos. 258 and 259) that owing to a leakage from French sources the French press of September 19 carried reports that 'agreement has been reached in London upon (i) the cession to Germany without plebiscite of frontier districts in Czechoslovakia where the German population is in a strong majority; (ii) a guarantee of the independence of a neutral Czechoslovakia by the limitrophe States and by Great Britain, France and Italy; (iii) the renunciation by Prague of her engagements of mutual assistance with France and the Soviet Union.' There were also reports 'that France and England are making a joint *démarche* to Prague which contains not only advice but an offer of a guarantee from England as well as France in return for point (i) above.'

in the Reich. Once Nazi whole-hoggers realize how reluctant France and Great Britain are to defend Czechoslovakia I am anxious lest they may take or make an excuse for seizing whole country after all.

Although it should be clear from your message that bargaining would be dangerous I propose to take first opportunity to see Minister for Foreign Affairs who is at present extremely engaged in order to impress upon him in guarded language this point and also danger of unscrupulous attempts to provoke some 'catastrophic' incident.

That the danger is no imaginary one is clear from terms of a new proclamation by Herr Henlein to Sudeten Germans issued over German wireless at 2 p.m. today. In it he urged them to continue all possible resistance to intolerable Czech brutality, adding 'all is going well; you will soon be released'. It was announced at the same time that Sudeten legion now formed in Germany numbered 40,000 men and that new recruits were pouring in daily from Czechoslovakia. According to Czech broadcast Czech customs post at Neuhausen near Asch was attacked last night by an armed band from Germany and Czechoslovak authorities anticipate further attacks of a similar nature.

Would it not be desirable to draw attention of the German Government to their responsibilities in this respect?

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

#### No. 960

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 19, 8.25 p.m.)*  
*No. 651 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10178/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 19, 1938

My Yugoslav colleague who has exceptional sources of information has just told me that he knows Czechoslovak Government have telegraphed to instruct their Minister in Paris to ask the French Government point-blank whether they will or will not hold to their engagements if Czechoslovakia is attacked by Germany. Council of Ministers will be in permanent session in Prague during the night and discuss French reply. If that reply is favourable my informant is confident that Czechoslovak Government will reject our proposals so that war will ensue. He is equally confident that if the French reply is unfavourable the Czechoslovak Government with the exception of Mgr. Sramek the intransigent representative of Catholic interests in the Cabinet will accept our proposals realising that any other course would mean useless suicide.

My Yugoslav colleague who is anxious for peace understands French Cabinet is very divided and fears they may be influenced by the belief that Czechoslovak Government would fight *in any circumstances*, [? and] that this unfounded belief may turn the scale in deciding the French Government not to leave Czechoslovakia to fight alone.

In my colleague's belief therefore issue of peace or war is being decided tonight in Paris.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

No. 961

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 19, 9.10 p.m.)*

*No. 650 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10125/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 19, 1938

Your telegram No. 300.<sup>1</sup>

Message was delivered in writing in French and English by French Minister and myself at an audience today September 19 at 2 p.m. My English version was marked secret and dated September 18.

2. President Benes was greatly moved and agitated. His first comment was that as his Government had not been consulted when questions of such deep concern to it had been discussed he did not propose to reply. He was moreover a constitutional President and must refer the matter to his Government, and also, he first said, to Parliament. My French colleague drew his attention to critical and urgent nature of the question and I was able to reinforce his remarks to good effect by reading first paragraph and first sentence of third paragraph of your telegram No. 301<sup>2</sup> and whole of your telegram No. 302.<sup>3</sup> President seemed to be impressed though later on he indicated that he would not be able to reply today.

3. Speaking with self-control but with bitterness he showed that he felt that, after all the efforts which he and his Government had made, they were being abandoned. I pointed out to him that at least he was being offered a new and important guarantee by His Majesty's Government.

4. During perusal of French version President Benes asked for an elucidation of paragraph 6. My French colleague and I explained that we took it to mean that, in place of existing treaties, under which Czechoslovakia had reciprocal military obligations, she would receive international guarantee in which His Majesty's Government would participate and which would not call for any reciprocal obligations on the part of Czechoslovakia.

5. President Benes seemed to be wrestling with himself as to the attitude which should be adopted so I thought I might tell him that I realised that he was placed before a cruel decision. I knew Czechs were a brave people and I did not think suffering and sacrifice which would be involved by war would greatly weigh with them but after the first immediate reaction, what should, and I hoped would, weigh with them was future of their country. From that point of view it seemed to me that choice lay between worse than loss of everything acquired in 1918 and on the other hand the retention backed by a British guarantee of nearly everything which they had gained in so far as concerned unity and independence of Czechs and Slovaks themselves and territories in which they were a majority.

6. Dr. Benes listened with attention but showed that he felt guarantees

<sup>1</sup> No. 937.

<sup>2</sup> No. 941.

<sup>3</sup> No. 938.

which he already possessed had proved valueless. He said he did not believe proposed solution would prove final or be anything more than a stage towards eventual domination by Germany and develop further German ambitions. He referred to an article explaining them in the 'Daily Mail'.

7. Nevertheless my impression fortified by the knowledge reported in my telegram No. 644<sup>4</sup> is that President Benes is more likely to accept than to refuse and is very receptive to any reason which will help him to justify acceptance to his people.

8. Audience was over by 2.45 p.m.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

<sup>4</sup> No. 952.

### No. 962

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 392 Telegraphic [C 10177/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 19, 1938, 11.15 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 488.<sup>1</sup>

1. Message in my telegram No. 386<sup>2</sup> was necessarily provisional because if conversations were to have full value it seemed essential that Prime Minister should be in possession of Czechoslovak reply.

While we hope this may be possible we cannot certainly assume that Czech Government will give in a few hours final answer on this question which obviously confronts them with necessity of such vital decision.

2. If argument of your third paragraph is that Chancellor may attribute any postponement of meeting to uncertainty of attitude of British Government, you can assure him this is not the case, adding that we have in conjunction with the French Government impressed our view upon Prague and are awaiting their reply.

3. In the circumstances of which you are aware and in view of action taken by British and French Governments it would be in the highest degree unreasonable if German Government were to make any delay, which we hope will not be necessary but which may be unavoidable, the excuse for precipitate action.

<sup>1</sup> No. 958.

<sup>2</sup> No. 939.

### No. 963

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received September 20, 11.30 a.m.)*

*No. 490 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10170/1941/18]*

*BERLIN, September 20, 1938*

I called on State Secretary early this morning and gave him message in your telegram No. 392.<sup>1</sup> He was perturbed at the delay in the confirmation

<sup>1</sup> No. 962.



of the date of meeting and said that Berchtesgaden had already rung up to ask whether hour of Prime Minister's arrival tomorrow, September 21, could if possible be notified to the German Government before noon today so as to enable the necessary plans to be made here.

State Secretary's attitude was that if Prague made difficulties there was even a greater urgency for the meeting than if they acquiesced. This is certainly a consideration.

My general attitude was that the German Government must have confidence in us as we did in them.

State Secretary informed me confidentially that Herr Hitler had provisionally arranged to leave Berchtesgaden tonight so as to arrive at Cologne tomorrow morning.

If there is any change of plan I submit the best course would be a direct message through me to the Chancellor.

I understand that the Czech Cabinet meets this morning so that it would seem improbable that their reply can be received before this afternoon at the earliest.

#### No. 964

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 20, 12.30 p.m.)*

*No. 652 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10172/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 20, 1938

I have just been informed by telephone (11 a.m.) from Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the reply to joint message may be expected in the early afternoon.

2. At the same time I hear from a reliable source that very early this morning it was decided to make a formal protest to British and French Governments. My informant believes that the very fact of protest if in fact made will indicate that the Czechoslovak Government are resigned to the necessity for compliance. He thinks, however, that in order to help Czechoslovak Government to take the plunge and to prevent a delay which might as I have indeed already pointed out to President Benes be disastrous, reply should be given forthwith to a protest or enquiry strongly and definitely advising immediate acceptance.

3. Should the protest be made to me or there be any sign here of procrastination in reply given to me I would propose subject to any further instructions meanwhile to give such advice. It is, however, perhaps more probable that the protests will be delivered in London and Paris.

Repeated to Paris.

No. 965

*Note by Mr. Speaight*

[C 10328/1941/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 20, 1938

Mr. Kirkpatrick rang up from Berlin to say:—

1. Message to Mr. Strang from the Ambassador. His Excellency wished to repeat his former warning about the very grave risk of postponing a final decision about the Godesberg meeting.

2. The German press reports that Czech troops crossed the German frontier at 3.30 this morning. This made the risk of delay all the greater, since it might be the sort of incident which Hitler would consider would absolve him from his undertaking not to march.

R. L. SPEAIGHT

No. 966

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 307 Telegraphic [C 10172/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 20, 1938, 2.10 p.m.

Your telegram No. 652.<sup>1</sup>

I approve your speaking in sense indicated in paragraph 3 should occasion arise.

<sup>1</sup> No. 964.

No. 967

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 20, 2.15 p.m.)*

*No. 265 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10187/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 20, 1938

M. Bonnet tells me he has just heard from Czechoslovak Minister here that his Government has not yet decided whether to (1) appeal to arbitration or (2) accept basis of Franco-British plan.

M. Bonnet has instructed French Minister at Prague to inform M. Benes that (1) would be folly and would mean war and that (2) is the only possible course for M. Benes to take.

M. Bonnet begs Mr. Newton will *at once* make further *démarche* as official reply of Czechoslovak Government is expected at three o'clock today.

Repeated to Prague.

No. 968

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 20, 7.30 p.m.)*  
*No. 654 Telegraphic [C 10211/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 20, 1938, 5.20 p.m.

Paris telegram No. 265.<sup>1</sup>

I at once associated myself with the action which my French colleague had just taken in accordance with his instructions. I took the opportunity also to draw attention to ... [?] the<sup>2</sup> dangers of bargaining and giving any excuse for precipitating war. The reply of the Czechoslovak Government is now being drafted and should be ready soon.

Repeated to Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 967.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

No. 969

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 20, 6.20 p.m.)*  
*No. 266 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10206/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 20, 1938

Prague telegram No. 651<sup>1</sup> and my telegram No. 264.<sup>2</sup>

I sounded Minister for Foreign Affairs on above without giving away informant.

2. M. Bonnet assured me that there was complete unanimity in French Cabinet in approving Anglo-French note to Czechoslovakia. Idea was further mooted in Cabinet that M. Benes should be informed by French Minister at Prague that in case of non-compliance by Czechoslovakia French Government would consider themselves released from their treaty obligations, but certain ministers felt this was unnecessary at present stage so idea was dropped.

3. Meanwhile instructions to French Minister reported in my telegram No. 265<sup>3</sup> were carried out by him early this afternoon. In this connexion I read to His Excellency Prague telegram No. 652.<sup>4</sup> He has not heard of (? General Staff's)<sup>5</sup> protest but agrees to proposed remedy for dealing with. . . .<sup>5</sup>

4. M. Bonnet is very pleased with tone of French press last night and this morning and thinks it surprisingly favourable and more so than British press.

Repeated to Prague and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 960.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. This telegram, telephoned on September 19 at 11.40 p.m., reported that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had heard 'nothing essential' from Prague during the evening.

<sup>3</sup> No. 967.

<sup>4</sup> No. 964.

<sup>5</sup> The text is here uncertain.

No. 970

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*  
*No. 395 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10170/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 20, 1938, 6.30 p.m.*

We now learn from Prague that the Czech reply is to be handed to Newton almost at once. It will take time, however, to cypher and decypher, and although the Prime Minister and his colleagues will consider it as soon as they get it it does not look as though it would be possible for the Prime Minister to arrive until late tomorrow.

No. 971

*Note by Sir A. Cadogan*  
*[C 10440/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 20, 1938*

Sir Nevile Henderson telephoned at 7.30 to say that Herr von Ribbentrop had instructed Dr. [sic] Weizsäcker to suggest that in the circumstances it might be better to postpone the visit till Thursday morning. Herr von Ribbentrop had asked Dr. Weizsäcker if that would meet the Prime Minister's wishes. Dr. Weizsäcker seemed to think that it might and consulted Sir Nevile Henderson on the point. Sir Nevile said that that would depend on whether the situation could be held until Thursday. Sir Nevile added to me that in his view it meant that the Germans meant to hold the situation.

Herr von Ribbentrop had asked whether in the circumstances the Prime Minister could fix a definite hour on Thursday morning. If so he proposed that an identic communiqué should be issued immediately to the effect that the Chancellor and Prime Minister had decided to resume the conversation which they had begun at Berchtesgaden at Godesberg on Thursday morning at .

Dr. Weizsäcker is waiting for a reply. Sir Nevile Henderson repeated that in his view this would be a better arrangement and that it was a good risk to take.

A. C.

No. 972

*Note by Mr. Strang*  
*[C 10440/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 20, 1938*

I telephoned to Sir N. Henderson this evening to say that the Prime Minister agreed that it was better now to postpone the meeting until Thursday, September 22. The Prime Minister suggested 12.30 p.m. for the time of

arrival at the aerodrome in Germany, and agreed to the issue of the communiqué as suggested by Sir N. Henderson in his telephone conversation with Sir A. Cadogan earlier in the evening.

After consultation with the German Government, Sir N. Henderson informed me by telephone that the German Government agreed to the issue of the communiqué in the terms suggested, and that it would be given out by the German wireless service at 11 p.m.

The terms of the communiqué were as follows:—

'The German Führer and Chancellor and the British Prime Minister have decided to resume the conversation which they began at Berchtesgaden at Godesberg on Thursday, September 22nd, at 3 p.m.'

W. STRANG

### No. 973

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 20, 7.45 p.m.)*  
*No. 267 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10207/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 20, 1938

Having heard that elements on the Left in Paris and Geneva are putting pressure upon M. Benes to induce him to refuse our proposals, I asked M. Bonnet whether he could confirm this. He replied that it was quite likely, though he did not seem to attach undue importance to it. He admitted, however, that he had heard from Prague that M. Benes' reply was likely to be evasive.

I then suggested that the moment seemed to have come when we should inform M. Benes that, unless his reply was an acceptance pure and simple, France and Great Britain would wash their hands of Czechoslovakia in the event of a German attack (see my telegram No. 266<sup>1</sup>).

M. Bonnet did not demur, but asked me to telegraph you at once for your views.

Repeated to Berlin and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 969.

### No. 974

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 20, 8.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 661 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10214/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 20, 1938

My telegram No. 652<sup>1</sup> and Paris telegram No. 265.<sup>2</sup>

The same informant believes that despite action taken by my French colleague and myself reply due now at 7.30 p.m. will contain proposal for arbitration in accordance with treaty of arbitration between Czechoslovakia and Germany.

<sup>1</sup> No. 964.

<sup>2</sup> No. 967.

This reference to arbitration will be a concession to die-hard elements but my informant believes Czechoslovak Government will then give way unreservedly if forthwith pressed sufficiently hard by the French and British Governments. Should reply be as anticipated I will of course comment as authorised in your telegram No. 307,<sup>3</sup> but some more definite reply from London and Paris is likely to be required. I am therefore sending this warning so that you may be ready. . . .<sup>4</sup>

Repeated to Paris.

<sup>3</sup> No. 966.

<sup>4</sup> The text is here uncertain.

#### No. 975

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 20, 8.30 p.m.)*

*No. 268 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10208/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 20, 1938

My telegram No. 267.<sup>1</sup>

M. Bonnet now urges most insistently that if reply is as foreshadowed in my telegram under reference a joint communication to M. Benes should be made at once in the sense suggested.

Repeated to Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 973.

#### No. 976

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax  
(Received September 20, 8.40 p.m.)*

*No. 497 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10210/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 20, 1938

The French Ambassador informs me that the Polish Ambassador had an interview with Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden today.

It is very possible that the Regent of Hungary met General Göring today at Rominten or elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Latter told me yesterday that he was leaving that night for a 'shoot'.

I feel that situation cannot hold much longer and if Czech reply constitutes anything short of surrender or if Czechoslovak Government is unable to control internal situation it will be impossible to prevent serious trouble, with which German troops will in the end have to deal. Both sides will naturally accuse the other of having begun it, but it may well prove impossible to decide with impartiality which really did so.

Chancellor has now proposed Thursday morning September 22 for the next meeting. When telephoning to this effect to the State Secretary he

<sup>1</sup> In a telegram (No. 115) despatched at 1.55 p.m., Sir G. Knox reported that inquiries at the Hungarian Foreign Office had elicited neither a confirmation nor a denial of this report. Sir N. Henderson also reported (telegram No. 495) an announcement that the Hungarian Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs had been received by Herr Hitler on the morning of September 20. See Volume III of this Series, Chapter I.

asked latter whether this would be likely to meet the wishes of His Majesty's Government. The State Secretary replied that he thought it would. I told the latter that all depended on whether German Government could hold situation quiet till then. State Secretary naturally could not answer this but I am of opinion that we must regard proposal as indicating that Herr Hitler will hold his hand until after the meeting. At the same time unless and until he knows how the Czechs intend to act he will certainly do nothing to stop military concentrations now under way.

Repeated to Warsaw, Paris, Prague and Budapest.

**No. 977**

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*  
*No. 397 Telegraphic: [? by telephone] [C 10360/65/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 20, 1938, 9.15 p.m.*

Please transmit following personal message from Prime Minister to Chancellor.

Begins.

News continues to reach me of further concentration of troops on Czechoslovak frontier. Pending resumption of our conversations to which I look forward, I would, in best interests of peaceful solution that we seek, earnestly urge that steps might be taken to suspend further measures of this character.

Ends.

I realise that this message may produce no effect but I should like it transmitted unless you think it will do harm.

**No. 978**

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 20, 9.35 p.m.)*  
*No. 664 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10215/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, *September 20, 1938*

Your telegram No. 300.<sup>1</sup>

Following are the chief points of the Czechoslovak Government's reply received at 7.45 this evening.

1. Czechoslovak Government are convinced Franco-British proposal cannot realise the object of peace.

2. Czechoslovak Government have not been consulted.

3. They cannot decide on a question of frontiers without consulting Parliament.

4. State would be mutilated in every respect.

5. Question of peace would not be resolved because (a) minority problems would again arise, (b) the balance of power would be destroyed.

<sup>1</sup> No. 937.

6. Czechoslovak Government appreciate offer of a guarantee which would open way to agreement if nationality problems were equitably settled.
  7. These problems could still be settled on basis of Czech proposals.
  8. Czechoslovak Government demand application of Treaty of Arbitration with Germany of 1926 and are ready to accept an arbitral award.
  9. Czechoslovak Government address a final appeal to British and French Governments and beg them to reconsider their points of view.
- Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

No. 979

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 20, 10.45 p.m.)*  
*No. 668 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10216/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 20, 1938

I have very good reason from an even better source to believe that (? formal)<sup>1</sup> reply handed to me by Minister for Foreign Affairs should not be regarded as final. A solution must however be imposed upon Government as without such pressure many of its members are too committed to be able to accept what they realise to be necessary.

If I can deliver a kind of ultimatum to President Benes, Wednesday, he and his Government will feel able to bow to *force majeure*. It might be to the effect that in view of His Majesty's Government the Czechoslovak Government must accept the proposals without reserve and without further delay failing which His Majesty's Government will take no further interest in the fate of country.

I understand that my French colleague is telegraphing to Paris in a similar sense.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.

No. 980

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 20, 11.5 p.m.)*  
*No. 489 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10168/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 20, 1938

Prague telegram No. 648.<sup>1</sup>

While one must of course avoid mistake of being over credulous and be prepared for the worst and while Nazi whole-hoggers may have large appetites, I have no reason to believe that Herr Hitler seeks to achieve more than incorporation of Sudeten areas into Germany. Despair of Czechs constitutes

<sup>1</sup> No. 959.



now in my opinion the chief danger not only to peace but also to preservation of restricted Czech unity and integrity and immediate acceptance under *force majeure* by M. Benes of British mediation on basis of self-determination the best prospect not only of most favourable possible terms under the circumstances for Czechoslovakia but also of early relaxation of German military measures and press campaign.

I shall draw attention of German Government this morning to alleged attack on Customs post at Neuhausen and warn them earnestly of their responsibility of keeping Sudeten refugees in order.

Mistake in the past has been not to take Herr Hitler at his word and so to give him opportunity of going back on it. We should take him at his word now and not give him this opportunity. If he means to go back on it he will do so irrespective of anything we say or of our confidence or mistrust, but at least our moral position will be much stronger if he does so in spite of our professed confidence.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

### No. 981

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 20, 11.15 p.m.)*

*No. 667 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10243/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 20, 1938

My telegram No. 661.<sup>1</sup>

Reply in French was handed to me by Minister for Foreign Affairs at interview which terminated at 8 p.m.

Dr. Krofta explained that it was constitutionally and otherwise impossible for Czechoslovak Government to accept our proposals which would dismember their country. They therefore proposed arbitration but Dr. Krofta added, at the end of their reply a door was left open. President would be ready to give me further explanations if desired tomorrow.

I replied refusal or evasion at this last moment meant the destruction of his beautiful country, while acceptance meant the retention of most of what mattered to Czechs and Slovaks. I repeated what I had said to the President as to vital urgency of a satisfactory reply, quoting once more from your telegrams 301<sup>2</sup> and 302.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Chamberlain was flying tomorrow to Germany, how disastrous it would be for Czechoslovakia if he came without any satisfactory reply from Prague now that the attitude of the French and British Governments was generally known to German Government. This warning in regard to Mr. Chamberlain's departure for Germany tomorrow seemed to make a special impression.

I reminded the Minister for Foreign Affairs of communication made to Dr. Benes during the day by my French colleague and supported by myself to the effect that an appeal to arbitration would be folly and would mean war and that acceptance of settlement of British plan was only possible

<sup>1</sup> No. 974.

<sup>2</sup> No. 941.

<sup>3</sup> No. 938.

course (see Paris telegram No. 265<sup>4</sup>). I added that I had since received your specific confirmation of what I had known in advance to be the view of His Majesty's Government. I also spoke as authorised in your telegram No. 307.<sup>5</sup>

Dr. Krofta who was in considerable distress repeated nevertheless that Czechoslovak Government simply could not accept proposal and dismemberment of their country all at forty-eight hours notice. He seemed resigned to the worst.

I finally begged him to report what I had said and be ready to receive me again during the night as soon as I had a reply [from] my Government.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

<sup>4</sup> No. 967.

<sup>5</sup> No. 966.

## No. 982

*French Ambassador to Sir A. Cadogan*

[C 10360/65/18]

AMBASSADE DE FRANCE À LONDRES, 20 Septembre 1938

Cher Sir Alexander,

Je voudrais compléter les indications que je vous ai données hâtivement tout à l'heure par le téléphone. Les nouvelles que nous recevons de source militaire montrent une accentuation rapide de la mobilisation allemande sur la frontière tchécoslovaque. Celle-ci se poursuit à un rythme tel qu'elle est près d'être aujourd'hui complètement réalisée. Actuellement, en effet, 22 divisions seraient en place, massées principalement à la frontière ouest et sud-ouest, alors que le maximum prévu serait de 30 divisions. Des indications précises sont fournies à votre Attaché Militaire à Paris, mais peut-être jugerez-vous utile d'agir sans attendre les précisions qu'il pourra vous faire parvenir.

Depuis trois jours nous nous sommes efforcés de retenir le Gouvernement tchécoslovaque pour qu'il ne prenne pas de dispositions militaires de nature à précipiter les événements. Il est clair, en présence de l'augmentation des forces ennemies à la frontière tchèque, que notre action ne peut continuer à s'exercer que si nous pouvons donner à Prague l'assurance qu'une pression parallèle est opérée à Berlin.

C'est pourquoi mon Gouvernement attacherait beaucoup de prix à ce que le Premier Ministre, s'appuyant sur les déclarations faites par le Chancelier, essayât de retenir le Reich en lui représentant que la concentration à laquelle se livre l'État-Major allemand compromet l'œuvre de conciliation amorcée à Berchtesgaden.

Je n'ai pas besoin de vous signaler l'intérêt que verrait mon Gouvernement à ce que cette démarche pût être effectuée de toute urgence.

Veuillez, cher Sir Alexander, croire à mes sentiments bien sincèrement dévoués.

CH. CORBIN

No. 983

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 22)*  
*No. 445 Saving: Telegraphic [C 10350/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 20, 1938

As soon as I learnt of message which had been given by State Secretary to this Embassy as regards unwillingness to provide record of the conversation between Prime Minister and Herr Hitler, I telephoned personally to Baron von Weizsäcker and protested in strong terms against this discourtesy. He was obviously confused himself but said that his instructions had come direct from Herr von Ribbentrop who was with the Chancellor when he telephoned them. I told State Secretary that I would call on him first thing in the morning to communicate to him a protest which I had been informed was being telegraphed from London on the subject.

Having learnt next morning that Baron von Weizsäcker had left by air at 8 a.m. for Berchtesgaden, I addressed to him a personal letter in terms of your telegram No. 383.<sup>1</sup> The text of this letter was telephoned down to Berchtesgaden in the course of the day. At the same time I took opportunities to speak in no measured terms to Herr von Papen, Baron Neurath and Field-Marshal Göring on the subject.

Late last night State Secretary brought back with him a letter from Herr von Ribbentrop<sup>2</sup> explaining in very unconvincing terms the reason for his previous attitude but adding that in the circumstances the Chancellor had agreed to communicate notes of the conversation to the Prime Minister. I understand that these will be handed me to-morrow by Herr Schmidt. I asked Baron von Weizsäcker why they could not be given to me to-day. He was unhappy and apologetic but said that they could not be prepared before to-morrow.

<sup>1</sup> No. 931.

<sup>2</sup> See No. 985.

No. 984

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 22)*  
*No. 466 Saving: Telegraphic [C 10361/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 20, 1938

Czech Chargé d'Affaires called on me this morning to inform me that his Minister was postponing indefinitely his return to Berlin and that German Minister had also unofficially left Prague. He added that the report alleged to have been issued by Reuters to the effect that the Czech Government had accepted the Franco-British plan was incorrect. The Czech Government had not accepted and would go to war rather than accept it.

I told M. Schubert that I could only tell him that if they did so they would

make grievous error and be merely courting disaster. I realised that whatever I said would have no effect as I had no doubt that his Government regarded me as anti-Czech and pro-German. I was neither but I did at least seek what was in my opinion in best interests of Czechoslovakia. I had had many talks with his Minister and we had always been in full accord but even his Minister was regarded in Prague as pro-German. If however his advice had been taken, Czechoslovakia would not be today in the sad position in which she now found herself.

It was, I continued, a grave mistake to believe that Herr Hitler was bluffing or that the economic situation of Germany or national desire for peace would prevent him from acting. The Czechs had believed that they had won a great victory on May 21. Never had there been a greater mistake. The situation today was the outcome of May 21 and even if he foresaw disaster Herr Hitler could never now disband the million and a half men which he had mobilised without a solution of the Sudeten question.

I had warned M. Mastny again and again that to haggle over full autonomy meant a plebiscite, and that to oppose a plebiscite meant war and the possible loss of Prague itself and the real disruption of Czechoslovakia. M. Benes had had terribly difficult circumstances to contend with but he had thrown away his opportunities during the past four months, until it was too late. Even worse might befall if he threw them away again.

It was useless to talk as he did about hypothetical probabilities and the oilfields of Roumania etc., the Sudeten problem was a question on its merits and it was inconceivable to imagine that they could be coerced to remain where they were against their will. They were far greater Pan-Germanists than the Austrians and had always been a thorn in the side of the Austrian Government in this respect. Once Austria was incorporated in the Reich it was obvious that the Sudeten would insist on incorporation also and that only brute force could keep them where they were. Brute force could only mean the active support of Great Britain and France and though British opinion might be divided I did not myself see British youth being used to resist principle of self-determination which was basis of constitution of British Empire. Even if British youth was prepared to die for the Czechs I could not see how we could in fact save them [from] the Germans. A blockade could not be effective for many months and in that period hundreds of thousands of Czechs would have perished and even after the defeat of Germany it would never be possible to reconstitute Czechoslovakia in her present form.

It was tragic and a sorry business but I should be misleading him if I spoke any other language. The important thing now was to preserve the independence of the Czechs and Slovaks not their domination over Sudeten Germans. If M. Benes was wise and far-seeing he would bow to *force majeure* and accept the Franco-British plan in the certainty that by so doing he would win European sympathy and secure much better conditions than were ever likely if he preferred in despair to risk involving all Europe in a war which morally could not be justified whatever its hypothetical justification on

grounds of future German expansionist aims. In my opinion it was M. Benes and not Herr Hitler who was bluffing or miscalculating in this respect.

M. Schubert was very unhappy, as indeed I was myself, but he persisted in asserting that the Czechs would fight rather than yield in hope that Europe would after all come to their aid.

No. 985

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 22)*

*No. 979 [C 10336/1941/18]*

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *September 20, 1938*

His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin presents his compliments to H.M. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit to him the under-mentioned documents.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The record of the conversation to which this correspondence refers was transmitted separately.

ENCLOSURE I IN No. 985

*Letter from Herr von Ribbentrop to Sir N. Henderson*

BERCHTESGADEN,  
*19th September, 1938*

My dear Ambassador,

I have heard from the State Secretary, Freiherr von Weizsäcker, that Mr. Chamberlain would attach particular value to receiving a protocol of his conversation with the Führer.

In this connection I would like to make the following observations:

In view of the particularly confidential nature of the discussion, and as indeed Mr. Chamberlain is aware, no stenographic record of the conversation was kept. No protocol of the conversation therefore exists. In translating Legationsrat Schmidt only made use of catchwords which he jotted down. Consequently on our side too only rough and general sketches of such conversations are recorded, since a comprehensive record is neither possible nor necessary.

It is true that on former occasions records composed from memory have once or twice been provided by Herr Schmidt. This has led to certain misunderstandings. In consequence of this experience the Führer has, for his part, given instructions that such records composed by Dr. Schmidt from memory should in principle no longer be communicated by us, as was indeed earlier the case. Hence Freiherr von Weizsäcker's refusal communicated to you to-day.

I quite appreciate, however, that Mr. Chamberlain would like to have a *résumé* of this long conversation. The Führer has accordingly, at my request,

to-day decided that in this exceptional case Dr. Schmidt should prepare a record for Mr. Chamberlain (which naturally cannot be binding on either side) and should communicate it to you.

With kind regards,  
RIBBENTROP

ENCLOSURE 2 IN No. 985

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN,  
September 19, 1938

My dear State Secretary,

I have been instructed by Lord Halifax to tell you that he is most reluctant to convey to the Prime Minister, who, he feels, would most properly be resentful, the intimation which you made yesterday to a Secretary of this Embassy in regard to the record made by Dr. Schmidt of the conversation between the Reichs Chancellor and Mr. Neville Chamberlain at Berchtesgaden.

The Prime Minister naturally assumed that he would receive a copy of this record; indeed if he had for a moment thought otherwise he would of course have arranged for an interpreter of his own to be present. In point of fact, before the Prime Minister and his advisers left Berchtesgaden the latter actually asked members of the German delegation how soon the record would be available, and the only point raised by the German delegation was that the Chancellor must see it first. Had Mr. Chamberlain then been aware of the attitude which it is now proposed to adopt, he would certainly have made the strongest possible protest against it.

In conclusion I am to point out that the decision which is said to have been arrived at as a result of the discussions last March, but of which neither the Embassy here nor the Foreign Office in London has had any intimation whatsoever, cannot in any sense be regarded as a justification for the attitude which is now being adopted.

NEVILLE HENDERSON

No. 986

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 21, 4.15 a.m.)*  
*No. 666 Telegraphic [C 10257/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 21, 1938, 12.20 a.m.

Following is text<sup>1</sup> referred to in my telegram No. 664.<sup>2</sup>

Czechoslovak Government thank British and French Governments for communication which they have made to it in which they set out their point of view on solution of existing international difficulties regarding Czecho-

<sup>1</sup> For the French text of which the above telegram is a translation, see No. 987.

<sup>2</sup> No. 978.

slovakia. Conscious of its responsibility for the interests of Czechoslovakia, the interests of friends and allies as well as for the interests of general peace, Czechoslovak Government express unshaken conviction that proposals which are contained in that communication are not calculated to attain object at which French and British Governments are aiming in crucial efforts which they are making in favour of peace.

These proposals were drawn up without previous consultation with representatives of Czechoslovakia and an attitude hostile to her has been taken up without giving her a hearing although Czechoslovak Government had already (called<sup>3</sup>) attention to fact that it could not accept responsibility for a decision taken without its participation. It is therefore regretted that it should not have been possible to draw up these proposals in a manner corresponding to (? obligation to<sup>3</sup>) Czechoslovakia.

Actually Czechoslovak Government cannot from point of view of constitution take positive decision regarding frontier[s] of country. A decision of this kind would not be possible today without endangering democratic régime of country and whole (? democratic<sup>3</sup>)<sup>4</sup> system. In any case it would be necessary to consult Parliament.

In opinion of Government acceptance of a proposal of this kind would be equivalent to acquiescence in complete mutilation of State in every respect; from economic point of view and that of transport Czechoslovakia would be completely paralysed and from strategic point of view she would find herself in an extremely difficult situation; and especially she would sooner or later fall under absolute influence of Germany.

Even if Czechoslovak Government were resigned to proposed sacrifices, question of peace would in no way be settled.

(a) Numerous Sudeten Germans would prefer for well-known reasons to leave the frontiers of Reich and to settle down in democratic atmosphere of Czechoslovak State. This would result immediately in new difficulties and new national conflicts.

(b) To paralyse Czechoslovakia would entail a profound political change for whole Central and South-East Europe. Balance of force[s] in Central Europe and in Europe in general would be upset; and this would not fail to produce important consequences in every other State and particularly also in France.<sup>5</sup>

(c) Czechoslovak Government is sincerely grateful for intention of Great Powers to guarantee integrity of Czechoslovakia which it greatly appreciates. Such a guarantee would certainly open the way to understanding between all those interested if existing national conflicts were amicably settled without imposing on Czechoslovakia unacceptable sacrifices.

Czechoslovakia in the course of last years has given numerous proofs of her unshakeable devotion to cause of peace. On insistence of its friends Czecho-

<sup>3</sup> This conjectural emendation appears in the file copy of the telegram.

<sup>4</sup> According to the French text this should read: 'juridic'.

<sup>5</sup> According to the French text this should read: 'for all other States and particularly for France'.

slovak Government on occasion of negotiations on Sudeten German question has gone so far that its attitude has been recognised and approved by whole world—even one of declarations of British Government emphasized that it was proper to remain within framework of Czechoslovak Constitution and that (? even<sup>6</sup>) Sudeten party itself at the time when latest proposals of Government were presented to it did not reject them and showed clearly its conviction that intentions which inspired them were sincere. In spite of revolt instigated from abroad of a part of Sudeten German population, Government has solemnly declared that it maintains proposals by which it met wishes of Sudeten German nation.<sup>7</sup> It still considers this line of action to be possible in so far as nationality problems in the Republic are concerned.

Czechoslovakia has always remained faithful to treaties and has carried out engagements arising from them legitimately, either with regard to her friends or to League of Nations and its principles or to other peoples. She has been and is always ready to honour treaties in all circumstances. If she defends herself today against possibility of violence she does so relying on engagements which are still recent, and on declarations of a [her] neighbour as well as on arbitration treaty with her victim<sup>8</sup> which has been recognised to be still in force by several declarations of<sup>9</sup> German Government. Czechoslovak Government underlines possibility of executing<sup>10</sup> this treaty and demands its application. Honouring their signature they are ready to accept whatever arbitral decision might be made. Any kind of conflict could be thus avoided. This would render possible a quick solution in conformity with honour and dignity of all interested States.

Czechoslovakia has always been bound to France by most devoted esteem and friendship as well as by an alliance in respect of which no Government and no single Czechoslovak will ever fail. She has lived and continues to live in her faith in the great French nation whose Government has so often given her assurances of solidarity and friendship.

She is bound to Great Britain by a traditional devotion and friendship, by respect and by esteem which will always inspire Czechoslovakia in indissoluble collaboration between the two countries and in their common efforts in favour of<sup>11</sup> whatever conditions may exist in Europe. Czechoslovak Government know that efforts made by British and French Governments arise from a real interest. They thank those Governments very sincerely but for reasons enumerated above they address to them a new and last appeal and beg them to reconsider their point of view. In doing this they believe they are serving not only their own interests but also those of their friends, as well as the interests of peace and of the remainder of Europe.<sup>12</sup> At this decisive time

<sup>6</sup> This conjectural emendation appears in the file copy of the telegram.

<sup>7</sup> According to the French text this should read: 'German nationality of the Sudeten'.

<sup>8</sup> *Sic*. According to the French text this should read: 'the Arbitration Treaty of October 16, 1926 which has been recognized . . . '.

<sup>9</sup> The words 'the present' are here omitted.

<sup>10</sup> According to the French text this should read: 'applying'.

<sup>11</sup> The word 'peace' is here omitted.

<sup>12</sup> According to the French text this should read: 'healthy evolution of Europe'.



it is not only the fate of Czechoslovakia which is in the balance but also that of other countries and particularly of France.

Repeated to Berlin.

No. 987

*Note from Czechoslovak Government to British Legation, Prague<sup>1</sup>*

[C 11299/1941/18]

MINISTERSTVO ZAHRANIČNÍCH VĚCÍ, PRAHA, le 20 Septembre, 1938

Le Gouvernement tchécoslovaque remercie les Gouvernements britannique et français de la communication qu'ils lui ont faite, en formulant leur façon de voir sur la solution des difficultés internationales actuelles concernant la Tchécoslovaquie. Conscient de sa responsabilité qui découle pour lui des intérêts de la Tchécoslovaquie, des intérêts des amis et alliés de cette dernière, ainsi que des intérêts de la paix générale, il exprime sa conviction que les projets qui y sont contenus ne sont pas à même de réaliser le but que poursuivent les Gouvernements britannique et français dans les grands efforts qu'ils déploient en faveur de la paix.

Ces projets ont été conçus sans consultation préalable avec les représentants de la Tchécoslovaquie et un point de vue a été adopté contre elle, sans qu'elle ait été entendue, bien que le Gouvernement tchécoslovaque ait attiré l'attention sur le fait qu'il ne pourrait accepter la responsabilité d'une décision qui serait prise sans lui. Aussi est-il également compréhensible que les dits projets n'aient pu être conçus de façon à correspondre aux possibilités de la Tchécoslovaquie.

En effets [*sic*] le Gouvernement tchécoslovaque n'a même pas la possibilité au point de vue de la Constitution de pouvoir prendre une décision concernant les frontières. Une décision de ce genre ne serait point possible aujourd'hui sans porter atteinte au régime démocratique du pays et à tout son système juridique. Dans tous les cas, le parlement devrait être entendu.

De l'avis du Gouvernement, l'acceptation d'un projet de cette nature équivaldrait à laisser mutiler entièrement l'État à tous égards. Au point de vue économique et des transports, la Tchécoslovaquie serait complètement paralysée et, au point de vue stratégique, elle se trouverait dans une situation extrêmement difficile; notamment, elle tomberait tôt ou tard sous l'influence absolue de l'Allemagne.

Même si le Gouvernement tchécoslovaque se résignait aux sacrifices proposés, la question de la paix n'en serait nullement résolue:

(a) Des [*sic*] nombreux Allemands des Sudètes préféreraient, pour des raisons bien connues, quitter les frontières du Reich pour s'établir dans l'atmosphère démocratique de l'État tchécoslovaque. Il en résulterait immédiatement de nouvelles difficultés et de nouveaux conflits nationalitaires.

(b) Paralyser la Tchécoslovaquie entraînerait un changement politique pro-

<sup>1</sup> The original of this note was despatched to the Foreign Office by H.M. Legation at Prague on September 27 and received on September 29.

fond dans toute l'Europe Centrale et du Sud-Est. L'équilibre des forces en Europe Centrale et dans l'Europe en général s'en trouverait détruit; cela ne manquerait pas de faire surgir des conséquences de portée considérable pour tous les autres États et notamment aussi pour la France.

(c) Le Gouvernement tchécoslovaque est sincèrement reconnaissant de l'intention des Grandes Puissances de garantir l'intégrité de la Tchécoslovaquie, il l'estime et l'apprécie hautement. Une telle garantie ouvrirait certainement la voie à une entente entre tous les intéressés, si les conflits nationalitaires actuels se réglaient à l'amiable sans imposer à la Tchécoslovaquie des sacrifices inacceptables.

La Tchécoslovaquie a donné au cours des dernières années des preuves nombreuses de son dévouement inébranlable à la cause de la paix. Sur les instances de ses amis, le Gouvernement tchécoslovaque, à l'occasion des négociations sur la question allemande des Sudètes est allé si loin que son attitude a été reconnue et approuvée par le monde entier — même une des déclarations du Gouvernement britannique a souligné qu'il conviendrait de rester dans le cadre de la constitution tchécoslovaque — et le parti des Allemands des Sudètes, lui-même, lors de la présentation des dernières propositions du Gouvernement, ne les a pas repoussées et a manifesté ouvertement sa conviction que les intentions qui les inspiraient étaient sérieuses et sincères. Malgré la révolte suscitée du dehors dans une partie de la population allemande des Sudètes, le Gouvernement a déclaré solennellement qu'il maintenait les propositions dans lesquelles il allait au-devant des vœux de la nationalité allemande des Sudètes. Il considère encore comme possible ce mode d'agir en ce qui concerne les problèmes nationalitaires dans la République.

La Tchécoslovaquie est toujours restée fidèle aux traités et a rempli les engagements qui en découlaient pour elle à l'égard soit de ses amis, soit de la Société des Nations et de ses membres, soit des autres peuples. Elle a été et est toujours prête à y faire honneur dans toutes les circonstances. Si elle se défend aujourd'hui contre la possibilité de violences, [*sic*] elle le fait en s'appuyant sur les engagements encore récents et les déclarations de son voisin, ainsi que sur le Traité d'arbitrage du 16 octobre 1926, que plusieurs déclarations du Gouvernement allemand actuel ont reconnu être encore en vigueur. Le Gouvernement tchécoslovaque souligne la possibilité d'appliquer ce traité et en demande l'application. Faisant honneur à sa signature, il est prêt à accepter la sentence d'arbitrage qui serait prononcée. Toute espèce de conflit pourrait être ainsi conjurée. Cela rendrait possible une solution rapide, conforme à l'honneur et à la dignité de tous les États intéressés.

La Tchécoslovaquie a toujours été liée avec la France par l'estime et l'amitié la plus dévouée ainsi que par une alliance à laquelle aucun gouvernement et aucun Tchécoslovaque ne failliront jamais. Elle a vécu et continue à vivre dans sa foi en la grande nation française, dont le gouvernement lui a si souvent assuré la solidité de son amitié. Elle est liée à la Grande-Bretagne par un dévouement et une amitié traditionnels, par le respect et l'estime, dont s'inspirera toujours la Tchécoslovaquie dans la collaboration

indissoluble entre les deux pays et dans leurs efforts communs en faveur de la paix, quelles que soient les conditions qui règnent en Europe.

Le Gouvernement tchécoslovaque sait que les efforts déployés par les Gouvernements britannique et français découlent d'un véritable intérêt. Il les en remercie bien sincèrement. Mais, pour les motifs déjà énumérés, il leur adresse de nouveau un appel suprême et les prie de reconsidérer leur point de vue. En ce faisant, il croit servir non seulement ses propres intérêts, mais encore ceux de ses amis, ainsi que l'intérêt de la paix et de la saine évolution de l'Europe. Dans ces moments décisifs, ce n'est pas seulement le sort de la Tchécoslovaquie qui est en jeu, mais aussi celui des autres pays et notamment de la France.

**No. 988**

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 21, 12.20 a.m.)

*No. 269 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10209/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 21, 1938

Minister for Foreign Affairs tells me he has instructed French Minister at Prague to make immediate representations to M. Benes as to vital necessity for his acceptance of the Franco-British proposal.

M. Bonnet hopes that this *démarche* will produce speedy and favourable result.

**No. 989**

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*  
*No. 296 Telegraphic: [? by telephone] [C 10214/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 21, 1938, 12.40 a.m.

My telegram to Prague No. 315.<sup>1</sup>

Please at once urge French Government to instruct French Minister at Prague to join with his British colleague in these representations.

Please act immediately on receipt at whatever hour.

Repeated to Prague and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 991.

**No. 990**

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) (Received September 21, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 498 Telegraphic [C 10270/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 21, 1938, 12.45 a.m.

Following is my appreciation of the position:—

Though possibly unaware of exact terms of settlement of British plan Herr Hitler sees within his grasp possibility of achieving a big success for his policy

without war or at any rate without general war. His prestige will be greatly enhanced in Germany if there is no war. It is not in his interest to spill German blood unnecessarily.

At the same time he believes it to be probable that Czechs rather than surrender territory will fight, alone if needs be, but always in hope of provoking general conflagration. German army is fully prepared for that eventuality but it will not act now that self-determination is admitted unless catastrophic circumstances and absolute necessity for protection of German Sudeten lives or direct Czech provocation against German territory compel it to do so.

Every kind of rumour as regards German aggressive intentions is prevalent but in my opinion these should be attributed either to Czech or Communist propaganda or to the belief that readiness for all eventualities means intention to aggress in any case.

Latter interpretation is contrary to common sense since it is obvious that Herr Hitler's triumph and his popularity with his people will be much greater if he achieves his object without war and heavy German losses.

We must accept Herr Hitler's proposal for meeting at Godesberg on Thursday as indicating his intention to hold his hand at any rate till after that meeting. All my information is to the effect that he was impressed by the Prime Minister and I feel convinced he will not take any action before that meeting which would clearly compromise it.

On the above grounds I am decidedly of the opinion that the message in your telegram No. 397<sup>1</sup> would cause Herr Hitler resentment and disappointment in as much as it would imply mistrust of himself and his intentions. Nor would he in any case suspend measures unless and until he is sure that Czechs will not fight. I am consequently availing myself of your discretion not to transmit it.

In my view the key to the situation lies at Prague whose resentment is such that they may well seek to provoke a general war. I am of course unaware of reply of Czechoslovak Government but if it is unsatisfactory best hope of peace, both general and local, lies in making it unmistakable and publicly clear at Prague that if Czechs resist they will get no support at all from either France or ourselves.

<sup>1</sup> No. 977.

#### No. 991

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*<sup>1</sup>

*No. 315 Telegraphic: [? by telephone] [C 10214/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 21, 1938, 1.20 a.m.*

Your telegrams Nos. 661<sup>2</sup> and 664<sup>3</sup>.

You should at once join with your French colleague in pointing out to Czech Government that their reply in no way meets the critical situation

<sup>1</sup> This telegram appears to have been drafted before No. 989.

<sup>2</sup> No. 974.

<sup>3</sup> No. 978.

which Anglo-French proposals were designed to avert, and if adhered to would, when made public, in our opinion lead to an immediate German invasion. You should urge the Czech Government to withdraw this reply and urgently consider an alternative that takes account of realities. Anglo-French proposals remain in our view only chance of avoiding immediate German attack. On basis of the reply now under consideration I would have no hope of any useful result ensuing from a second visit to Herr Hitler, and Prime Minister would be obliged to cancel arrangement for it. We therefore beg Czech Government to consider urgently and seriously before producing a situation for which we could take no responsibility.

We should of course have been willing to put Czech proposal for arbitration before the German Government if we had thought that at this stage there was any chance of its receiving favourable consideration. But we cannot for a moment believe that it would be acceptable now, nor do we think the German Government would regard the present proposition as one that is capable of being settled by arbitration as Czech Government suggest.

If on reconsideration Czech Government feel bound to reject our advice, they must of course be free to take any action that they think appropriate to meet the situation that may thereafter develop.

Please act immediately on receipt at whatever hour.

#### No. 992

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 21, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 669 Telegraphic [C 10244/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 21, 1938, 4.45 a.m.

Your telegram No. 315.<sup>1</sup>

Action accordingly was taken by my French colleague and myself at an audience with President which terminated at 3.45 a.m.

He promised final reply of Government would reach us by mid-day. Our impression was that it would express acceptance.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 991.

#### No. 993

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 21, 7.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 670 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10217/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 21, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

I have just received following communication from Dr. Hodza's Private Secretary who telephoned to Legation at 6.30 a.m. Begins.

'I am speaking on behalf of President of the Council Dr. Hodza, who asks me to convey to you following personal and preliminary information.

<sup>1</sup> No. 992.

'The Government's reply is affirmative. Czechoslovak Government has accepted proposals of Governments of London and Paris and official reply will be sent as soon as possible by M. Krofta or by M. Hodza.'

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

No. 994

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 21, 2.40 p.m.)*  
*No. 671 Telegraphic [C 10288/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 21, 1938, 12.45 p.m.

My telegram No. 670.<sup>1</sup>

If final reply of Czechoslovak Government is favourable I would suggest, whether by public statement or otherwise, something should be done without delay to express appreciation of the far-sighted patriotism, moral courage and wisdom of the Czech Government and people. I think it is very important not only to sweeten the pill for M. Benes and his Government personally but also to help them in every possible way to convince their public that decision is in the best interests of the country.

They may need all the assistance they can get to win over their countrymen and to prevent an outbreak of popular disturbance. Therefore submit for your consideration whether it would not be possible to persuade United States Government also to take some action on similar lines. If Czechoslovak public were made to realise that great Anglo-Saxon democracies thought decision a wise one in Czechoslovakia's own interests, it might make all the difference.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 993.

No. 995

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 21, 1.45 p.m.)*  
*No. 502 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10275/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 21, 1938

Immediate need at Godesberg will be to take prompt measures to avoid risk of further frontier and other incidents.

German Government will not modify their measures of military concentration unless definitely certain that Czech army would not resort to action of resentment and despair. So long as German military concentrations remain in threatening posture on the frontier there is a danger that Hitler will suddenly decide to advance into Sudeten areas (and if resisted further still) on the plea of protection of lives and property of Sudetens.

It would, consequently, be desirable that Czechoslovak Government should be prepared to give at once guarantees of their complete submission to Franco-

British plan by (a) withdrawing their military garrisons and (b) state police from all predominantly Sudeten areas.

If they did so we could then insist with justice on similar withdrawal of German concentrations from the neighbourhood of Czech frontier. In the areas vacated by Czech military and police, responsibility for law and order could probably safely be entrusted to Herr Henlein and Sudeten Municipal authorities.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

No. 996

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 21, 2.10 p.m.)*

*No. 672 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10289/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 21, 1938

My telegram No. 670.<sup>1</sup>

At 8.30 a.m. President Benes sent for my French colleague and read to him draft reply expressing satisfactory acceptance, followed, so I understand, by certain recommendations. It was understood that this reply would be delivered to him and to myself shortly afterwards.

2. At 10 o'clock President telephoned M. de Lacroix to say that difficulties had been experienced with leaders of political parties. French Minister pointed out extremely serious consequences which would follow from any delay now and begged the President to use all his authority to overcome difficulties. The President promised to do so but said he was not all-powerful.

3. Shortly before 12 I sent a message to the President through Dr. Hodza by telephone to effect that you would expect to hear from me by midday.

If I were unable to say by then that I had received an affirmative answer, I anticipated that His Majesty's Government would not be willing to accept any further responsibility for the consequences.

4. I have since seen Dr. Hodza who with his usual optimism expressed confidence that he would be able to overcome above-mentioned difficulties by the afternoon. At the same time he informed me in strict confidence that situation had been further complicated by telegram from Czech Minister in Paris saying that a decision need not be taken in too great haste. I told Dr. Hodza that I could not wait much longer before warning my compatriots to leave the country.

5. In accordance with a request from the President, my French colleague is telephoning to Paris for authority to confirm in writing what he said at the audience during the night. I assume from your telegram that I already have authority to make a written communication and propose also to deliver one in company with my French colleague.

6. I suggest that you should send for Czechoslovak Minister in London and request him to telephone urgently direct to the President whatever message you think fit in the circumstances.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 993.

No. 997

*Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 21, 6.20 p.m.)

No. 76 Telegraphic [C 10378/2319/12]

WARSAW, September 21, 1938, 3.40 p.m.

My telegram No. 74.<sup>1</sup>

French Ambassador informed Minister for Foreign Affairs yesterday that French Government had received assurances from Soviets that they would not attempt to send troops or aircraft across Polish territory in the event of hostilities in which they might be engaged.<sup>2</sup> In the course of conversation the French Ambassador asked M. Beck what was the significance of the Polish *démarche*<sup>3</sup> in Paris, London and elsewhere regarding Teschen area. M. Beck pointed out that Poland had always insisted on equality of treatment for the Polish minority and that if there was to be a cession of Sudeten territory without a plebiscite and Polish minority did not receive similar treatment Poland would have to resume her liberty of action. French Military Attaché has asked Polish General Staff for information regarding any military measures being taken by Poland and while the latter did not commit themselves he is under the impression that a military *coup* is not to be excluded.

French Ambassador also asked Minister for Foreign Affairs whether there was any truth in statements in German press that M. Beck was to meet General Göring and Regent of Hungary in East Prussia. While M. Beck gave a *démenti* it was so worded that M. Noël thinks that such a meeting is possible.

In general the French Ambassador considers that in the event of no consideration being given to Polish demands they may take the matter into their own hands and seize Teschen area.

Personally I do not consider Poland is as yet prepared to face taking isolated military action though she might do so if favourable opportunity occurred and this seemed the only way of obtaining her desiderata.

<sup>1</sup> Printed in Volume III of this Series, Chapter I. In this telegram of September 20 Sir H. Kennard expressed the opinion that if Germany acquired the Sudeten area and Polish claims to equal treatment for the Polish minority were ignored, he could not 'rule out the possibility that the Polish Government might wish to face us with a *fait accompli*'.

<sup>2</sup> This appears to have been the first definite information received on the subject by the Foreign Office.

<sup>3</sup> The documents dealing with the attitude of H.M. Government towards the Polish and Hungarian claims upon Czechoslovak territory will be printed in Volume III of this Series.

No. 998

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax* (Received September 21, 3.45 p.m.)

No. 673 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10300/1941/18]

PRAGUE, September 21, 1938

My telegram No. 672.<sup>1</sup>

French Minister and I have acted as foreshadowed in paragraph 5.

<sup>1</sup> No. 996.



President Benes thereupon asked for further written declarations by French and British Governments that if Czechoslovakia accepts Anglo-French proposals and if none the less German Government attacks Czechoslovakia the two Governments will come to her assistance.

In return President said that he undertook, and was authorized to do so in the name of his Government, that he would accept the proposals without reservation.

I pointed out to Dr. Benes that it was extremely dangerous to make new condition for acceptance at this last minute. In response to my earnest pleading he consented to change his condition so far as His Majesty's Government were concerned to expression of a 'Vœu' that His Majesty's Government would give such an undertaking. I said that I understood 'Vœu' to mean that it may be expression of an earnest hope and desire that His Majesty's Government would be willing to give the written declaration in return for her acceptance of proposals.

So far as French Government are concerned there need presumably be no difficulties. To them Dr. Benes is of course not expressing a 'Vœu' but making a condition which however they (? have)<sup>2</sup> already admitted by implication since they intimated that acceptance is a condition of their fulfilling their existing treaty engagements.

If His Majesty's Government are willing to accept condition I suggest they should limit their obligation to period proposed to (*sic*)<sup>2</sup> forthcoming negotiations.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

## No. 999

*Note from H.M. Legation, Prague, to the Czechoslovak Government*<sup>1</sup>

[C 11299/1941/18]

September 21, 1938

In the view of His Majesty's Government the Czechoslovak Government's reply in no way meets the critical situation which the Anglo-French proposals were designed to avert and if adhered to would, when made public, in the opinion of His Majesty's Government lead to an immediate German invasion. His Majesty's Government therefore urge the Czechoslovak Government to withdraw this reply and urgently consider an alternative that takes account of realities. The Anglo-French proposals remain, in their view, the only chance of avoiding an immediate German attack. On the basis of the reply now under consideration His Majesty's Government would have no hope of any useful result ensuing from a second visit to Herr Hitler and the Prime Minister would be obliged to cancel the arrangement for it. They therefore

<sup>1</sup> This text appears to be the written communication referred to by Mr. Newton in No. 996. It was despatched to the Foreign Office by H.M. Legation at Prague on September 27 and received on September 29.

beg the Czechoslovak Government to consider urgently and seriously before producing a situation for which His Majesty's Government could take no responsibility.

His Majesty's Government would of course have been willing to put the Czechoslovak proposal for arbitration before the German Government if they had thought that at this stage there was any chance of its receiving favourable consideration. But they cannot for a moment believe that it would be acceptable now nor do they think that the German Government would regard the position as one that is capable of being settled by arbitration as the Czechoslovak Government suggest.

If on reconsideration the Czechoslovak Government feel bound to reject this advice, they must of course be free to take any action that they think appropriate to meet the situation that may thereafter develop.

### No. 1000

*Note by Sir A. Cadogan*  
[C 10765/1941/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 21, 1938*

In accordance with your instructions<sup>1</sup> I rang up the Czechoslovak Minister and gave him the following message which he took down:—

'Secretary of State understands from Mr. Newton that Czechoslovak Government are still hesitating to accept Anglo-French proposals.

'Secretary of State begs M. Masaryk to telephone immediately to President Benes, pointing out that Prime Minister has arranged to leave for Germany tomorrow morning, and that it is essential that acceptance by Czechoslovak Government be received without delay.

'His Majesty's Minister was instructed last night to make a representation on these lines to the President, and the Secretary of State desires most emphatically to repeat what Mr. Newton said on that occasion.'

M. Masaryk promised to send this message immediately, but he added that he had in fact been in telephonic communication with President Benes since 3 o'clock. President Benes had told him that the reply was then being drafted and would be handed to the British and French Ministers by 4 o'clock. He said that it constituted full acceptance of the Anglo-French proposals though it contained a paragraph in which the hope was expressed that if, in spite of this, Czechoslovakia were attacked Great Britain and France would come to her assistance.<sup>2</sup>

A. C.

<sup>1</sup> This note was addressed to the Secretary of State.

<sup>2</sup> Sir A. Cadogan added the following postscript: '4.30 p.m. M. Masaryk tells me he now hears the draft is complete and Mr. Newton has been sent for. It is unconditional acceptance, with the above "hope" attached—but not as a condition. A. C.'

## No. 1001

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 21, 5.5 p.m.)*  
*No. 270 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10319/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 21, 1938

Prague telegram No. 672.<sup>1</sup>

I have consulted Minister for Foreign Affairs and suggested that he should give Czech Minister in Paris piece of his mind. M. Bonnet promised to do so at once and to warn Czech Government.

I fear the two prominent English members of Parliament mentioned in my private letter to you of September 16<sup>2</sup> and who are now in Paris are busy giving bad advice to M. Osusky and to certain French politicians.

Repeated to Berlin and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 996.

<sup>2</sup> In this letter Sir E. Phipps, after dealing with the matters referred to in the text, wrote: 'Having reported to you, without comment, Daladier's brave words to me on September 8th [see No. 807], I felt bound to report the more cautious statement of Daladier and the panicky utterances of Bonnet on September 13th [see Nos. 852, 855, and 857].

'Bonnet repeated to me this morning that he and the French Government would accept any plan advocated by the Prime Minister or Runciman and impose it upon the Czechs: if the latter were recalcitrant they would be told that France disinterested herself from their fate; but if meanwhile the Germans attacked the Czechs the French would have to fulfil their treaty engagements.

'Now, although I am bound to report, and always have reported, what Daladier and Bonnet have said to me on this subject, I also feel bound to add the impression I receive from their declarations, unless I am content to be a mere post office. I must say, therefore, that my present impression is, despite Bonnet's rather braver language to me to-day (braver because war seems rather more remote), that I feel pretty certain that the French will by no means resort automatically to arms, even if the German forces cross the Czechoslovak frontier. They will, I believe, examine very closely the circumstances in which the "aggression" takes place, and I do not suppose we shall blame them for caution in this respect.

'Since writing the above I hear that Bonnet said to the assembled diplomatic French journalists on September 13th that France rejected any solution by recourse to arms but that she was ready to examine any proposal made with a view to a peaceful settlement.'

## No. 1002

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 21, 6.45 p.m.)*  
*No. 677 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10320/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 21, 1938

My telegram 673.<sup>1</sup>

My French colleague and I were summoned to Ministry of Foreign Affairs shortly before 5 p.m. where Dr. Krofta handed to each of us together a note dated September 21 of which following is a summary:—

'Under pressure of urgent insistence culminating in British communications of September 21 (see my telegram No. 672<sup>2</sup> paragraph 5) Czechoslovak

<sup>1</sup> No. 998.

<sup>2</sup> No. 996.

Government sadly accept French and British proposals on supposition (translate following into French 'in supposing') that the two Governments will do everything in carrying them out to safeguard vital interests of Czechoslovak state.

'Czechoslovak Government accept them as a whole<sup>3</sup> emphasising principle of guarantee as formulated and on supposition that the two Governments will not tolerate a German invasion of Czechoslovak territory which will remain Czechoslovakia[? n] until its transfer has been effected after fixing of new frontier by international court.

'They are of opinion that details for execution of proposal will be settled in agreement with Czechoslovak Government.'

Translation from French follows by telegrams<sup>4</sup> and text by bag.<sup>5</sup>

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

<sup>3</sup> These words were not clear in the telegram as at first transmitted. They were telegraphed later in their correct form.

<sup>4</sup> See No. 1004.

<sup>5</sup> See No. 1005.

## CHAPTER X

Mr. Chamberlain's meetings with Herr Hitler at Godesberg: Anglo-French conversations of September 25 and 26: Mr. Chamberlain's letter of September 26 to Herr Hitler. (September 21-26, 1938.)

No. 1003

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 318 Telegraphic [C 10405/4839/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 21, 1938, 6.50 p.m.*

It is evident that while details of transfer of Sudeten territories are being worked out, maintenance of law and order in those territories presents serious problem.

2. In the view of members of the Runciman mission it is essential that the Staatspolizei should be withdrawn at once. We fully concur; and you should at once impress this upon M. Benes. Staatspolizei should be at once withdrawn from all frontier districts where German population are in a considerable majority, their functions being taken over by gendarmerie and Gemeinde police as I understand was the position until a few years ago. I should be glad to have any suggestions from M. Benes as to precautions that might be taken.

3. I should hope that it might be possible to induce Herr Hitler to join in a broadcast appeal for restraint and maintenance of order.

4. For your information only, I anticipate Herr Hitler demanding that Czech troops be withdrawn at an early date from the frontier districts, and that German troops should replace them in the frontier districts.

5. I think regular German troops would at least be preferable to Henlein's Freikorps, who would be likely to work off private grudges and to commit outrages on political opponents.

6. We may, therefore, have to try to facilitate the entry of German troops at an early date into a defined area and to eliminate all danger of clash with the Czechs. It would, of course, be best if Dr. Benes himself would suggest that, in districts which will obviously pass to Germany, he no longer desires to retain responsibility for maintenance of order, and that German troops should be employed. I am also considering the practicability of providing for (a) an international force, or (b) a British force to support and stiffen local police in such mixed population districts as the Teplitz-Brüx area pending settlement. You should not as yet say anything about this to the Czech authorities, but I should welcome your observations.

7. I should be glad of your views as to whether ideas in paragraphs 4, 5 and 6 above should be put to Dr. Benes, and in what form.

Repeated to Paris, No. 297, and Berlin No. 401.

#### No. 1004

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 21, 10.0 p.m.)*

*No. 679 Telegraphic [C 10343/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 21, 1938, 8.0 p.m.

My telegram No. 677.<sup>1</sup>

Following is translation of communiqué<sup>2</sup> referred to in my telegram under reference.

'Forced by circumstances and by excessively urgent pressure and as a result of communication of French and British Governments . . .<sup>3</sup> September 21, 1938, in which the two Governments express their attitude in regard to assistance to Czechoslovakia if she refused to accept Franco-British proposals and was as a result attacked by Germany, Czechoslovak Government accept, in these conditions with feelings of grief, Franco-British proposals on supposition ('en supposant') that the two Governments will do everything to have them put into force with every safeguard for vital interests of Czechoslovak State. They note with regret that these proposals were prepared without prior consultation with Czechoslovak Government.

'Czechoslovakia (*sic*) profoundly regretting that their proposal for arbitration has not been accepted they accept proposals as a whole while emphasizing principle of guarantee as it is formulated in note and they accept them on supposition that the two Governments will not tolerate a German invasion of Czechoslovak territory up till moment when it shall have been possible to effect transfer of territory after fixing of new frontier by international commission spoken of in proposals.

'They are . . .<sup>3</sup> Franco-British (? note)<sup>3</sup> contemplates that all details of practical realisation of Franco-British proposals will be settled in agreement with Czechoslovak Government.'

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1002.

<sup>2</sup> The word 'note' is written in pencil on the text of this telegram as a suggested amendment to the word 'communiqué'.

<sup>3</sup> The text is here uncertain.

#### No. 1005

*Note from the Czechoslovak Government to the British Legation, Prague<sup>1</sup>*

*[C 11299/1941/18]*

PRAHA, le 21 Septembre 1938

Forcé par les circonstances et les instances excessivement pressantes et à la suite de la communication des gouvernements français et britannique du

<sup>1</sup> This text was despatched to the Foreign Office from H.M. Legation at Prague on September 27 and received on September 29.

21 septembre 1938, dans laquelle les deux gouvernements ont exprimé leur manière de voir au sujet de l'assistance à la Tchécoslovaquie si elle refusait d'accepter les propositions franco-britanniques et serait à la suite de cela attaquée par l'Allemagne, le gouvernement tchécoslovaque accepte dans ces conditions avec des sentiments de douleur les propositions françaises et britanniques en supposant que les deux gouvernements feront tout pour les faire appliquer avec toute sauvegarde des intérêts vitaux de l'État tchécoslovaque. Il constate avec regret que ces propositions ont été élaborées sans la consultation préalable du gouvernement tchécoslovaque.

Regrettant profondément que sa proposition d'arbitrage n'a pas été acceptée, il les accepte comme un tout, en soulignant le principe de la garantie, comme elle est formulée dans la note et les accepte en supposant que les deux gouvernements ne toléreront pas l'invasion allemande sur le territoire tchécoslovaque qui restera tchécoslovaque jusqu'au moment où le transfert du territoire après la fixation de la nouvelle frontière par la commission internationale dont on parle dans les propositions, pourra être effectué.

Il est d'avis que la proposition franco-britannique suppose que tous les détails de la réalisation pratique des propositions franco-britanniques seront fixés d'accord avec le gouvernement tchécoslovaque.

#### No. 1006

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 21, 11.50 p.m.)  
No. 678 Telegraphic [C 10359/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 21, 1938, 8.45 p.m.

Following from Mr. Stopford for Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin.

Dr. Kundt informed me that today Caha<sup>1</sup> called on him at Hodza's request and discussed the future co-operation in regard to questions arising out of the proposed settlement with a view to avoiding bloodshed during transitional period. He has also been asked to see Minister of the Interior tomorrow. He estimates fugitives to . . .<sup>2</sup> at about 80,000 in addition to the 100 isolated persons previously working across the frontier and said that while these men were being incorporated in the Sudeten Legion for purposes of training efforts were being made to restrain small bands responsible for recent raids across the frontier.

<sup>1</sup> A senior official in the Prime Minister's Office.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 21, 11.35 p.m.)*  
*No. 675 Telegraphic [C 10341/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 21, 1938, 8.50 p.m.

My telegram No. 669.<sup>1</sup>

My French colleague and I arrived together and our joint audience during the night lasted from a little after 2 a.m. until 3.45. My French colleague read from his telegraphic instructions and I followed by reading your telegram. President Benes made full notes. We left no written communication.

2. President Benes then produced an ethnographical map and drew attention to difficulties and danger of a transfer on basis of paragraph 2 of our message of September 18.<sup>2</sup> He showed for example that it would bring German frontier within a few kilometres of Brünn and greatly narrow waist of Czechoslovakia between German Silesia and Austria. At the same time vital railway line passed through areas affected. We pointed out our message already contemplated possibility of negotiation and that we were not in a position to make any addition or alteration in its terms.

3. President Benes pointed out large numbers of German refugees would settle in Czech areas and thus perpetuate minority problem. We suggested such refugees need not necessarily be admitted and observed that possibility of exchanges of population was referred to in paragraph 4. M. Benes asked whether he was right in thinking that proposed national guarantee was similar to that given to Belgium. Our reply was that while we could not say more than was contained in paragraph 6 it seemed to us that there was the difference that Czechoslovakia would receive guarantees and not be called upon to undertake reciprocal obligations. In the event of acceptance of Anglo-French proposals M. Benes made some appeal for immediate relief from constant pressure and threats from German press campaign and military mobilization. We made it clear at various stages throughout the audience that in our opinion it was essential that Anglo-French proposals should be accepted without reservations pointing out that only after such acceptance would it be wise and relevant to raise points such as those to which he drew attention.

4. M. Benes still could not bring himself to admit irrevocably what he must have known in his heart now to be essential. He asked us to assure our Governments that he personally as President, and his Government, had never for one moment acted without fullest sense of responsibility or with slightest thought of provoking or admitting war. "That has never been in my thoughts for a single instant", he said. He had never had any idea of seeking to drag France and England into war and he could only explain their attitude on assumption that there had been such suspicions. During all the painful discussions and negotiations which had taken place he had had in

<sup>1</sup> No. 992.

<sup>2</sup> A pencilled note in the text amends this date to September 19.



mind not merely selfish interests but wider considerations. He had neither selfish nor doctrinaire. . . .<sup>3</sup> Nor had he ever been driven by Soviet Government which he had kept on one side nor based himself on its support or its wishes in his negotiations. Bolshevik participation had not and did not exist any more than legend of Russian aviators.

5. President warned us that internal troubles must be expected and he did not know how far they could be controlled by the Government. I interjected here that it would indeed be unfortunate if when the Government made necessary effort to save the situation by giving a favourable reply as I earnestly trusted it would, sacrifices undertaken should be rendered vain in the end by any serious failure to maintain discipline.

6. Towards the end of our . . .<sup>3</sup> M. Benes said that he took our *démarche* to be a kind of ultimatum and indeed only such an ultimatum could justify him and his Government in accepting Anglo-French proposals without obtaining beforehand sanction of Parliament as was constitutionally required. We therefore told him our *démarche* had character of an ultimatum in the sense that it represented final advice of our Governments and in their view the last possible moment for acceptance of their advice, if this country was to be saved.

7. The President said that he must consult his Government members of which were already in the Palace. These consultations must take a little time so that he did not accept our suggestion that we might wait meanwhile for answer. He said however that we would receive it from President of the Council or from Minister for Foreign Affairs by midday.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>3</sup> The text is here uncertain.

## No. 1008

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 28, 12.20 a.m.)  
No. 680 Telegraphic [C 10362/1941/18]

PRAGUE, September 21, 1938, 8.55 p.m.

Herr Jaksch, the leader of the German Insurgent<sup>1</sup> Democratic Party called at the Legation today and was received in my absence by the First Secretary.

He said that he had come on behalf of his party to appeal to His Majesty's Government and ask them what was to happen to the 400,000 adherents of the party. They were lost. There was no place for them in the Czech districts as the Czechs themselves would have an insoluble problem with their own refugees from the mixed areas. The decision had been taken on the initiative of the British and French Governments. He and his party did not wish to quarrel with it but were only regarding the question objectively. They must now lay the lives of their 400,000 adherents in the hands of the

<sup>1</sup> *Sic.* Presumably in error for Social Democratic Party.

British and French Governments and ask for advice as to what was to be done for them. He begged that this appeal might be sent to His Majesty's Government and said that he was now on his way to make a similar statement to French Legation. He was also proposing to make appeal through Anglo-American press.

Before he left he made tentative suggestion that some at any rate of the flower of the Sudeten German culture might be permitted to emigrate to perhaps Canada.

He was informed that while his statement would of course be passed on to higher authority no promise could be given to him of a reply.

A letter in the same sense signed by Herr Jaksch and Herr Taub has also been received at this Legation.

No. 1009

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 21, 9.0 p.m.)*

*No. 272 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10334/65/18]*

PARIS, September 21, 1938

Minister for Foreign Affairs asks me to submit to you following points:—

Germans have concentrated five further divisions against Czechoslovakia during last few days, making a total of 22 divisions on that front.

French Government contemplate placing seven divisions behind Maginot line in battle positions in addition to measures of which they have already informed us.

French Government feel that if they do not take any further measures now Herr Hitler may derive erroneous impression that they would not in any case oppose him by force even if he were to attack Czechoslovakia in near future.

Before taking these measures however French Government would like to learn opinion of His Majesty's Government. For instance do latter think they will be useful or the reverse for success of Prime Minister's approaching negotiations with Herr Hitler?

I pointed out that heavy German concentration against Czechoslovakia would seem to imply corresponding German weakness on French frontier. I asked therefore whether measures were contemplated for reasons of national defence or merely for psychological reasons mentioned above.

M. Bonnet replied mainly for latter but of course in event of German attack upon Czechoslovakia, French position would be safer if measures were taken.

His Excellency begs for reply tomorrow or at latest September 23.

No. 1010

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 21, 9.5 p.m.)*  
*No. 273 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10335/65/18]*

PARIS, September 21, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

Minister of War begs that your reply may reach Paris by September 22 about midday if possible.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1009.

No. 1011

*Viscount Halifax to the French Ambassador*  
*[C 9965/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, 21st September, 1938

Your Excellency,

I have received your note No. 490 of the 16th September<sup>1</sup> in which Your Excellency was good enough to convey to me the French Government's appreciation of the Prime Minister's action in seeking a personal interview with the German Chancellor in order to explore with him the possibility of a peaceful solution of the Czechoslovak problem.

2. Mr. Chamberlain is deeply touched by this generous tribute and he requests that you will convey to the French Government an expression of his sincere thanks for their message. The conversations on Sunday with Their Excellencies the President of the Council and the Minister for Foreign Affairs served to demonstrate once again the unity of purpose which exists between our two countries, and I would assure you that in these critical days both the Prime Minister and myself are constantly encouraged by the conviction that our efforts to save the peace of Europe will always meet with the fullest understanding and support on the part of your Government.

I have, &c.,

HALIFAX

<sup>1</sup> No. 904.

No. 1012

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 23)*  
*No. 1079 [C 10467/65/18]*

PARIS, September 21, 1938

My Lord,

I have the honour to transmit to your Lordship herewith a report by my Military Attaché containing the most recent information which has been supplied to him by the French Ministry of War in regard to the present stage of German mobilisation.

2. I would invite your Lordship's particular attention to the remark made by Colonel Gauché, the head of the Deuxième Bureau, that 'Of course there will be no European war, since we are not going to fight,' and to his frank justification for this statement, namely, that the French could not face the risk of the German air threat, since Germany's material was so superior that the French were powerless to deal with it.

I have, &c.,  
ERIC PHIPPS

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 1012

*Colonel Fraser to Sir E. Phipps*

PARIS, September 21, 1938

(No. 849.)

The Ambassador,

In amplification of my memorandum No. 845<sup>1</sup> of the 20th September, 1938, the distribution of the German divisions on the Czech frontier, as given to me by General Dentz, is as follows:—

Silesia—

4 Active Divisions (8th, 18th, 28th, and 2nd Mechanised).

Saxony—

4 Active Divisions (4th, 14th, 24th and 13th Mechanised).

1 Armoured Division (3rd).

1 Mobile Division (1st).

1 Reserve Division.

Bavaria—

3 Active Divisions (10th, 17th and 27th).

1 Armoured Division (1st).

3 Reserve Divisions.

Austria—

3 Active Divisions (44th, 45th and 7th).

1 Mobile Division (4th).

1 Armoured Division (2nd).

1 Reserve Division.

In addition there is the Sudeten Free Corps, which the Germans estimate at 40,000 (possibly exaggerated).

On the Western Front, from Aachen to the Swiss Frontier, there are three Army Corps (nine divisions) in the front line, supplemented by units of certain other corps a short distance in rear and at present employed on strengthening the German defensive line in the Rhineland.

This may be described as a thin 'couverture' and by no means able to hold the French if they really meant business. There are, of course, reserves in the interior of the country and in East Prussia, although a proportion of these are required to watch Poland.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed.

But pointed at Paris (and at London) is the threat of the German Air Force, and the Führer found a most convenient ambassador in Colonel Lindbergh, who appears to have given the French an impression of its might and preparedness which they did not have before, and who at the same time confirmed the view that the Russian Air Force was worth almost exactly nothing.

Yesterday evening I had an interview with Colonel Gauché. I told him that I had been that morning to pay my respects to Lieut.-General Kuhlen-thal, the German Military Attaché, who was convinced that there would not be a European War, to which Colonel Gauché replied, 'Of course there will be no European War, since we are not going to fight.' He went on to say that they could not face the risk of the German air threat—since their material was so superior that they (the French) were powerless to deal with it.

To sum up then, the military situation is that the German Army is mobilised, and that it has completed its concentration against Czechoslovakia. The 'couverture' in the West is very thin because Hitler is convinced, in spite of all statements to the contrary, that the threat of his Air Force is sufficient to keep the French, and consequently ourselves, quiet under all circumstances. The German Army has been mobilised at leisure under the almost impudent pretext of a practice mobilisation designed to remedy the defects discovered earlier in the year during the annexation of Austria. Czechoslovakia has been prevented from mobilising partly by the covert threat of instant action by Germany if she did, and partly by the exhortations of France and Great Britain, and now she finds herself like a bird in front of a snake, afraid even to take the measures necessary to defend herself.

The French estimate, and this is confirmed by our intelligence, that Hitler can press the button at any time from this evening onwards, and that if he does it he will not content himself with the occupation of the Sudeten areas, but will seize the whole of that part of Czechoslovakia which lies between Germany and Austria.

Will he do it?

The situation is another triumph for Hitlerian diplomacy. There is every reason, moreover, to suppose that once more it has been achieved in defiance of the opinion of his military leaders, and it cannot fail to increase enormously his prestige with the Army, and, if that be possible, with Germany as a whole.

W. FRASER

*Colonel, Military Attaché*

### No. 1013

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 22, 7.50 a.m.)*

*No. 682 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10321/4839/18]*

PRAGUE, September 22, 1938

Political Director at Ministry of Foreign Affairs has telephoned early this morning to say that Sudeten Freikorps crossed frontier from Germany

during night and occupied Asch. He did not know if there had been any returns [*sic*] but said that there were reports as yet unconfirmed that Reich Germans were involved as well. He added that while no counter-measures had yet been taken on Czech side situation had very dangerous possibilities.

He begged that this information should be transmitted urgently to London so as to reach Mr. Chamberlain before he left for Germany.<sup>1</sup>

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> In a telegram (No. 403) despatched at 9 a.m. on September 22, Sir N. Henderson was informed that the French Government had heard that the Sudeten Legion had crossed the Czech frontier and occupied Asch. He was instructed immediately to urge the German Government to prevent further incursion. In a subsequent telegram (No. 404) despatched at 12.50 p.m. Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes was instructed that 'Czechoslovak Government state that no resistance was offered to Sudeten Legion incursion into Asch, but that if these incursions continue, and if they come into contact with Czech soldiery, latter will be obliged to resist them. It is impossible to believe that, with their intense concentration round Czech frontier, German Government could not, if they would, prevent these incursions, and you should urge them again to take steps accordingly, pointing out the grave responsibility that they will bear in the event of a serious clash.'

#### No. 1014

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Godesberg)<sup>1</sup>*

*No. 1 Telegraphic [C 10402/65/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 22, 1938, 9.40 a.m.*

Following from Military Attaché.<sup>2</sup>

Travelled yesterday with British Representative in Berlin of large oil firm. He stated oil firms in Berlin had received same orders as regards arrangements for supply of petrol and lubricants for tomorrow morning as they had had for marches into Rhineland and Austria. He himself had been told to leave Berlin to await developments and not to return in any case before Monday.

He has information from Göring source that Germany's next action after settling Sudeten affairs will be immediate support of Hungary in demand for return of Transylvania.

Shall arrive Petersberg<sup>3</sup> about 9 p.m. tonight with details Czech defences and garrisons in Sudetenland.

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was numbered 1 in the series of telegrams sent to Godesberg and repeated to Berlin as No. 631.

<sup>2</sup> Colonel Mason-MacFarlane was temporarily in London.

<sup>3</sup> The Petersburg Hotel at Godesberg, where the Prime Minister was staying.

**No. 1015**

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*  
*No. 303 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10334/65/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 22, 1938, 11.10 a.m.*

Your telegram No. 272.<sup>1</sup>

French Government must of course be judges of requirements of their security, and His Majesty's Government cannot presume to offer advice. If French Government decide to take these measures, His Majesty's Government would see no objection.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1009.

**No. 1016**

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 22, 12.20 p.m.)*  
*No. 274 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10365/65/18]*

PARIS, *September 22, 1938*

My telegrams No. 272<sup>1</sup> and 273.<sup>2</sup>

In view of the alarming situation on Czechoslovak frontier French press for answer to the above at once.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1009.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1010.

**No. 1017**

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 22, 1.30 p.m.)*  
*No. 276 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10367/65/18]*

PARIS, *September 22, 1938*

My telegram No. 275.<sup>1</sup>

M. Bonnet points out that if these German attacks on Czechoslovakia materialize, danger of general war will be acute as France could not stand by idly.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1018. These two telegrams were apparently despatched in reverse order.

**No. 1018**

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 22, 1.40 p.m.)*  
*No. 275 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10366/65/18]*

PARIS, *September 22, 1938*

Your telegram No. 403<sup>1</sup> to Berlin and Prague telegram No. 682.<sup>2</sup>  
Secretary-General Ministry of Foreign Affairs tells me French Govern-

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. See No. 1013, note 1.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1013.

ment have heard from M. Benes that several other points of Czechoslovakian territory seem threatened by German regular and irregular forces.

M. Léger points out what a dangerous situation this would create if it materialised.

Repeated to Prague and Berlin.

#### No. 1019

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 22, 1.50 p.m.)*

*No. 683 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10373/4839/18]*

PRAGUE, September 22, 1938

My telegram No. 682.<sup>1</sup>

According to a . . .<sup>2</sup> report issued at 8 a.m. Sudeten German Freikorps detachments, under Deputy Wolemer [? Wollner], had demanded surrender of arms from Czech gendarmerie at Eger. This was refused, but may be enforced as gendarmerie were being hard pressed. During the night, Reich German S.A. and S.S. detachments entered the town and virtually took command of it. Railway station was being administered by a Reich German staff. Forty special railwaymen arrived at Eger yesterday from Germany, and at Asch members of G.P. had occupied all important administrative buildings in the town. During the night S.S. units arranged from Germany publication at many points on the frontier of German . . .<sup>2</sup> guards were handing over their weapons to Sudeten Germans.

Military Attaché has been informed that there are no Czech troops in Eger . . .<sup>2</sup> Teschen have been sent to Falkenau.

Repeated to Berlin, Paris and Godesberg.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1013.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

#### No. 1020

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

*No. 308 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10631/4839/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 22, 1938, 5.15 p.m.

.. Please send the following urgent message to M. Léger.

We have no information of progress of talks at Godesberg, but we are much disturbed by reports of incursions of Sudetendeutsch organisations over the border into Egerland, where German papers report that German flag is flying over Eger and Asch. This, if confirmed, is proceeding totally different from that contemplated on Sunday. We cannot anticipate what may be issue of Prime Minister's efforts; but these events, if true, obviously create entirely new situation, and we should be glad to know if, in consequence of them, you would now think it right to withdraw advice to Prague not to



mobilise in which we concurred on Sunday. In light of report which we hope to receive this evening from Godesberg we anticipate it should be possible to arrive at prompt decision as to whether we should or should not withdraw this advice at Prague.

Repeated to Prague, No. 326.

No. 1021

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 22, 5.45 p.m.)*  
*No. 688 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10436/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 22, 1938

2.0 p.m.

From my experience of the National Socialist German methods as applied both in Germany and here I am gravely apprehensive that those in control of the Reich may now allege that conditions have gone so to pieces in Czechoslovakia that a new situation has arisen entitling them almost as a duty to intervene after all. They would thus seek to deprive Czechoslovakia of such advantages as induced the Czechoslovak Government to accept the immense sacrifices to which they have just consented in reliance upon the advice of French and British Governments.

Conditions here have not gone to pieces but even if they had done so or were to do so it is obvious that Germans would bear the sole responsibility for such deterioration and would therefore be in no way entitled to benefit or to intervene to restore an order which they had themselves destroyed.

Apart from these considerations involving our own good name and moral responsibility Prime Minister will no doubt realise that no reliance whatsoever can be placed upon information which may reach him at Godesberg from German sources and that reports on Czechoslovakia will be circulated solely in interest of the German policy.

You will see from my reports that the Government in Czechoslovakia who have just shown the greatest moral courage in accepting our proposals at such short notice are fully alive to their responsibilities and neglecting no precautions to maintain order and justice. Germans on the other hand seem to be trying to exploit situation by amongst other methods the use . . .<sup>1</sup> Freikorps which they have formed and armed. If the German attitude should be as unscrupulous or hypocritical as may be feared from their recent record and . . .<sup>1</sup> Czechoslovak Government are entitled to look to His Majesty's Government to see that they obtain compensation due to them in consideration of having followed our advice and made great sacrifices involved.

There is another point. If the Czechs get the impression that the sacrifices made are going to be rendered vain they will of course fight and in the circumstances feel morally entitled to our support in addition to that of France.

Repeated to Berlin, Paris and Mr. Chamberlain.

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.

No. 1022

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 22, 6.30 p.m.)*  
*No. 277 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10398/4786/18]*

PARIS, September 22, 1938

Your telegram No. 308.<sup>1</sup>

M. Léger considers that advice to Prague not to mobilise should certainly be withdrawn. He is advising French Government in this sense. He points out that by the pressure our two Governments have put upon Czechoslovakia to make enormous sacrifices we have made it more necessary than ever before to prevent her being overrun now.

M. Léger points out this is his purely personal view. He will confirm it later if his Government agree.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1020.

No. 1023

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 22, 7.15 p.m.)*  
*No. 278 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10399/4786/18]*

PARIS, September 22, 1938

My telegram No. 277.<sup>1</sup>

M. Léger now tells me from M. Daladier and M. Bonnet that the Czechoslovak Military Attaché has informed the French General Staff that, owing to German aggressive movements, the Czechoslovak Republic is determined to defend itself by force.

M. Léger therefore suggests that within an hour from now, unless he hears to the contrary, the Czechoslovak Government shall be told that our advice not to mobilise is withdrawn.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1022.

No. 1024

*Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) and Sir G. Knox (Budapest)*  
*No. 64<sup>1</sup> Telegraphic: by telephone [R 7728/933/21]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 22, 1938, 7.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 78<sup>2</sup> (No. 119<sup>3</sup>).

You should at once inform the Government to which you are accredited that His Majesty's Government have learnt with regret that the Polish (Hungarian) Government should have found it necessary to take special

<sup>1</sup> No. 64 to Warsaw; No. 71 to Budapest.

<sup>2</sup> Printed in Volume III of this Series, Chapter I. In this telegram of September 22 Sir H. Kennard reported that according to statements in the Press the Polish Government were denouncing the Polish-Czech Agreement on Minorities of 1925, and taking further military measures.

<sup>3</sup> Printed in Volume III of this Series, Chapter I. In this telegram of September 21 Sir G. Knox reported on certain indications of abnormal military measures taken by the Hungarian Government.

military measures which appear to have no other object than to intimidate the Czechoslovak Government. His Majesty's Government cannot agree that there is any justification for such a policy of intimidation and they sincerely hope that the Polish (Hungarian) Government will not persist in it and above all that they will not carry it to the point where it would involve them in an actual act of aggression against the Czechoslovak State. Polish (Hungarian) case has been fully presented by Ambassador<sup>4</sup> and His Majesty's Government have it fully in mind. There can however be no justification whatsoever for attempting to compel an immediate settlement of their claims by direct action instead of through the processes of normal negotiation.

If Polish (Hungarian) Government prefer to proceed to direct action, His Majesty's Government cannot be responsible for the consequences.

Repeated to Prague No. 328.

<sup>4</sup> For the representations made to His Majesty's Government by the Polish Ambassador and the Hungarian Minister see Volume III of this Series, Chapter I.

### No. 1025

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

*No. 309 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10399/4786/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 22, 1938, 8.0 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 278.<sup>1</sup>

I agree that Czechoslovak Government should be told that we cannot continue to take responsibility of advising them not to mobilise.

His Majesty's Minister in Prague is accordingly being instructed to make this communication but not before 9 p.m. tonight.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No. 1023.

<sup>2</sup> See No. 1027.

### No. 1026

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 332 Telegraphic [C 10288/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 22, 1938, 8.12 p.m.*

If you think it may still be useful, you may inform Dr. Benes that His Majesty's Government are profoundly conscious of immense sacrifice involved for him and his Government in agreeing to Franco-British proposals, and recognise great public spirit that prompted their acceptance.

His Majesty's Government in conjunction with French Government only recommended these proposals in the belief that they afforded only hope of averting a general disaster and preserving Czechoslovakia from invasion. Whether this hope is realised or not, Czechoslovak Government can feel certain that this readiness to go to such extreme limits of concession will have secured to Czechoslovakia a measure of sympathy that nothing else could have aroused.

Repeated to Paris.

**No. 1027**

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 331 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10631/4839/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 22, 1938, 8.20 p.m.*

My telegram No. 326.<sup>1</sup>

French Government are informed by Czech Military Attaché that owing to German aggressive movements, Czech Republic is determined to defend itself by force. His Majesty's Government have agreed with French Government that Czechoslovak Government be informed that French and British Governments cannot continue to take responsibility of advising them not to mobilise.

You are instructed so to inform Czechoslovak Government, but you should not make this communication before 9 p.m. tonight.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1020.

**No. 1028**

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 22, 10.30 p.m.)*  
*No. 280 Telegraphic [C 10464/65718]*

PARIS, *September 22, 1938, 9.25 p.m.*

French War Office have just given Military Attaché the following information.

Thirty-one German divisions have now been located on frontier of Czechoslovakia.

The French have taken the following counter-measures.

Six infantry divisions and one light mechanised division have been moved up to the frontier. The orders for this move were issued at 15 hours and move will be completed at the latest by daylight tomorrow.

**No. 1029**

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*  
*No. 311 Telegraphic [C 10288/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 22, 1938, 9.45 p.m.*

My telegram to Prague No. 332.<sup>1</sup>

Please inform French Government in case they wish to send similar message. Repeated to Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1026.

No. 1030

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*  
*No. 312 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10640/4786/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 22, 1938, 10.10 p.m.*

News from Godesberg is not very clear, but Prime Minister has issued statement urging necessity of all parties refraining from action of any kind that might interfere with progress of conversations. He is also communicating message to Czechoslovak Government direct in same sense.

In view of this, we have telegraphed to Prime Minister informing him of communication we had proposed making in Prague regarding withdrawal of advice on mobilisation, but saying that in view of message received from him we were instructing His Majesty's Minister in Prague to suspend action.<sup>1</sup> Prime Minister has been asked to instruct His Majesty's Minister in Prague direct if he considers latter should nevertheless go ahead, in consultation with his French colleagues.

<sup>1</sup> Sir E. Phipps was informed by telephone from the Foreign Office at 9.10 p.m. of these instructions to Mr. Newton issued 'in light of a message from Horace Wilson at Godesberg'. This message from Sir H. Wilson cannot be traced in the Foreign Office archives.

No. 1031

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Godesberg)*<sup>1</sup>  
*No. 8 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10410/4786/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 22, 1938, 10.35 p.m.*

Before receipt of Sir H. Wilson's telephone messages<sup>2</sup> this evening, we had agreed with French Government to inform Czech Government that in view of aggressive German action (see Prague telegram No. 683<sup>3</sup>) and determination of Czech Government announced to French Government to resist, we could not take responsibility of maintaining our advice to them not to mobilise. That communication was to have been made to Czech Government at 9 p.m. tonight. We have suspended that instruction (and suggested to French Government to do the same) on receipt of Sir H. Wilson's telephone messages, meaning of which is not quite clear, but we assume that you would wish us to maintain suspension—and we shall do so—pending further word from you. If you think His Majesty's Minister, Prague, should nevertheless make communication, please tell him direct to go ahead on instructions in our telegram No. 331,<sup>4</sup> and inform his French colleague that he is doing so on direct authorisation from you.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> This telegram appears to be a message to the Prime Minister.

<sup>2</sup> These messages have not been traced in the Foreign Office archives. See No. 1030, note 1.

<sup>3</sup> No. 1019.

<sup>4</sup> No. 1027.

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 22, 11.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 281 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10400/4786/18]*

PARIS, September 22, 1938

Your telegram No. 312.<sup>1</sup>

I read the above to M. Bonnet to whom I had already at 9.15 o'clock read out Mr. Harvey's message of 9.10<sup>2</sup> suggesting the suspension of proposed communication to Prague regarding mobilisation.

M. Bonnet said he had at once told M. Léger to instruct French Minister at Prague accordingly.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1030.

<sup>2</sup> See No. 1030, note 1.

No. 1033

*Notes of a conversation between Mr. Chamberlain and Herr Hitler at Godesberg on September 22, 1938<sup>1</sup>*  
*[C 11970/11169/18]*

The Prime Minister said that at the end of the last conversation at Berchtesgaden the situation was as follows: After he had expressed his personal opinion on the principle of self-determination he had promised to consult his colleagues. He had gone home and had succeeded in getting not only his colleagues but the French Government and also the Czechoslovak Government to agree to self-determination in principle. It appeared that the simplest plan was to tell the Chancellor what were the British proposals, and then perhaps to consider how they could be carried out.

The Führer had said at the last meeting that the question of the Sudeten was urgent, and that a solution could not be delayed, but that a settlement must be reached before any other question could be discussed. This accordingly was the problem which he, Mr. Chamberlain, had set himself to attack. He did not know how much importance the Führer attached to the principle of self-determination as such. But the Führer had said at Berchtesgaden that a distinction must be drawn between the possible and the impossible. The Prime Minister's colleagues had agreed in the course of their deliberations in London, and were also of the opinion that the principle of self-determination need not necessarily be the basis of the existing system in all countries and in all circumstances; otherwise it might cause difficulties all over the world.

Once the principle of self-determination had been admitted, however, in the case of the Sudeten, and it was agreed that they should be given the opportunity to return to Germany, the question arose of how this was to be achieved. The first solution which came to mind was that of a plebiscite, but this method gave rise to difficulties, delays, and possibly disorders. Since

<sup>1</sup> These notes were made by Mr. Kirkpatrick. They are inserted at this place for convenience in following the correspondence.

the Führer had emphasised his desire for a quick solution, it had therefore seemed to all simpler to achieve a settlement not by a plebiscite, but by the agreed cession of territory to the Reich, subject to the proviso that measures should be laid down to enable people to be transferred from one area to another.

Some of the districts where there was an enormous preponderance of Germans presented no difficulties; but there were also mixed populations to consider. In the circumstances, when drawing up a new frontier, it seemed that some body must be set up for the purpose of frontier delimitation. They must be given a principle on which to work, and must at the same time have discrimination to draw a line having regard to political, geographical and military considerations, &c., as well as to the wishes of the local inhabitants.

He, Mr. Chamberlain, accordingly proposed that we should agree on a guiding principle and appoint a commission to carry it out. One could take as a basis a given proportion of Germans to the whole population, although that was a rough-and-ready calculation, since some Germans might prefer to remain in Czechoslovakia. Where it was established that, for example, 80 per cent. of the population were Germans, there would of course be no discussion. But a figure to be agreed upon might be established as a guiding principle for the commission, say, 65 per cent., subject to the use of their discrimination as defined above. The commission would consist of one German, one Czech, and one neutral chairman, with power to make a decision in the event of disagreement between the two other members.

We thought it important that an option should be given to populations to transfer, because it was practically impossible to draw a line which absolutely divided Czechs from Germans. There were thus two problems to consider, namely, the transfer of territory and the transfer of populations. The second presented some difficulty, because of the fact that there were obviously a number of persons with property or fixed interests in the territories concerned. In view of this difficulty, it would be necessary to draw such a line as to minimise to the greatest possible degree the necessity for transfer, but, as the Führer had himself recognised during the last conversation, it was impossible to avoid leaving certain minorities behind, and there must accordingly be adequate safeguards for these people. There was also the question of State property, although this was not an immediate matter. He desired only to mention it, as it would have to be considered later, and he presumed that the German Government would take over such property as buildings, belonging to the Czechoslovak Government, banks, public works, &c., at a valuation. There was similarly the ancillary question of the public debt, and he thought that the German Government would not refuse to take over an agreed proportion of the Czech public debt corresponding to the amount of territory which they received.

There was, finally, one more matter which he desired to raise. The cession of the proposed property meant that the existing frontier fortifications would no longer be in Czechoslovakia, and her security would be *pro tanto* diminished. He recollected that the Führer had said that he only wished to get this

Sudeten question settled and did not want any further territory. Nevertheless, we felt it not unreasonable that Czechoslovakia should want to substitute some other security for the loss of her strategic frontier. We had also considered what the Führer had said at Berchtesgaden about the threat to Germany of the Czechoslovak spear-head at her side. It seemed that the Führer's objections could be met and the Czech requirements satisfied at the same time, if we substituted [? for] the existing Czech alliances, with their military obligations, by [*sic*] a condition of guaranteed security against unprovoked aggression. Consequently, the British Government had agreed to join in guaranteeing Czechoslovakia against unprovoked aggression in the place of her existing treaties involving military obligations. Czechoslovakia would thus be a neutral State, under no military obligations, and would only be guaranteed against unprovoked aggression. He desired to add that this guarantee would not necessarily mean that the present Czech frontiers would be guaranteed in perpetuity. They could be altered by negotiation, as was being done in the present case.

Herr Hitler said that he would like to thank the Prime Minister for his great efforts to reach a peaceful solution. He was not clear, however, whether the proposals, of which the Prime Minister had just given him an outline, were those submitted to the Czechoslovak Government.

The Prime Minister replied: Yes.

Herr Hitler said that he was sorry, since these proposals could not be maintained.

It was not a question now of doing an injustice to Czechoslovakia, but of redressing grave injustices committed in the past. As a matter of principle a man who has committed an injustice can have no reason for complaint at the restoration to the victim of the rights of which he has been unlawfully deprived. Czechoslovakia was an artificial construction, which was called into being and was established solely on the grounds of political considerations. For this purpose a great wrong had been done to a number of other countries. Three and a half million Germans, against their will, which they vociferously proclaimed at the time, were forcibly incorporated into Czechoslovakia, as well as several million Slovaks together with a territory which was torn by violence from Hungary and which contained almost a million Hungarians. Furthermore, the Czechs, at a time when the Poles were fighting the Bolsheviks, took advantage of the situation to tear the Teschen territory, containing about 100,000 Poles, from the Motherland. That was the genesis of a State which possessed neither a history nor tradition, nor, indeed, conditions of existence. These other nationalities did not want in any circumstances to be under Czech rule. Representatives of Poland and Hungary had recently visited him and said that they would not in any circumstances agree to their nationals remaining under Czech rule. During the course of 20 years the Czechs had in point of fact been unable to conquer the sympathy of any of these nationals. However that might be, he declared that as Führer of Germany he spoke in the first place of Germans. He had been obliged,



owing to the provisions of the Peace Treaties to leave so many Germans in other countries that the interests of Germans were his first care. It was, however, his duty to say that demands were being made by others which had his full sympathy, and peace could not be firmly established until these claims had been settled.

The Prime Minister said that he did not wish to dissent. He, the Führer, had said that the Sudeten question was of the utmost urgency and that was why he had addressed himself to this particular problem. The others had not the same urgency.

Herr Hitler retorted that, of course, for him as a German this problem was most urgent. But a Pole or an Hungarian would, of course, have maintained that theirs was the most urgent question.

However this might be, he (the Chancellor) must emphasise that the problem was now in a most critical stage. In his view no delay was possible, and there seemed to be a slight difference between them as to the urgency of the matter. In his own view, a settlement must be reached within a few days. There were, as the whole world knew, military preparations on both sides, but this situation could not be held for very long and a solution must be found one way or another, either by agreement or by force. He desired to say, categorically, that the problem must be settled definitely and completely by the 1st October at the latest.

Another consideration which reinforced his view was the unstable situation in Czechoslovakia. Neither the Prime Minister nor he himself could say what the situation would be in Czechoslovakia to-day, to-morrow, or in a week. To-day there was a Cabinet crisis, and there might well be a State crisis to-morrow. It was quite impossible, in return for vague assurances, to diminish his watchfulness or to relax his military preparations. After twenty years of bitter experience the Germans had no confidence in the Czechs, and particularly in Dr. Benes, and would only put trust in Czech assurances when they were implemented by action. To-day, in Czechoslovakia, people of the streets were being mobilised, and the Bolsheviks were threatening to take the rudder. In the very interests of peace he was convinced that there must be no delay in reaching a clear-cut solution, since, if the Bolsheviks were to get the upper hand, he must say that the conditions for the maintenance of peace were definitely gone. He fully realised that the Prime Minister and the British Government had done their best to perform the necessary surgical operation on Czechoslovakia in the most peaceful manner, and he was perfectly prepared in principle to co-operate.

He added that another consideration present in his mind was the untenable position on the frontier. Since 1918, no fewer than 480,000 Sudeten Germans had emigrated from Czechoslovakia. The latest statistics compiled on the 20th September showed that since the present trouble started the number of refugees had reached the figure of 103,780. Whole villages were empty; in some, the men had gone and the women had stayed, in others, the men had been arrested or conscripted, whilst the women had stayed, whilst in others there

were only the children left wandering uncared for in the streets or the fields. Meanwhile, the temper of the refugees was rising to fever heat. These people could not be expected to view the problem with the same equanimity as Mr. Chamberlain and himself in the Conference Room. They had not left their homes for fun. He thought [? the fact] that in many cases they had abandoned their all proved that there was a catastrophical situation in Czechoslovakia. Furthermore, these refugees had swelled to such numbers that it had become impossible to keep them on the frontier and numbers had been moved into the interior of the Reich with the result that in these areas, too, feeling against the Czechs was rising daily.

The result of this state of affairs on the frontier was a series of armed clashes. Not only Sudeten but Slovak, Hungarian and Polish soldiers were endeavouring to desert into Germany; in addition there was a constant stream of refugees. The Czechs endeavoured for their part to cut these people off, and there were shooting affrays every night right along the frontier. The refugees, hearing the shooting, crossed the border back into Czechoslovakia to help their comrades—in many cases their own kith and kin. If this situation on the frontier went on for three or four days, there would be a regular frontier war. 2,300 kilom. of frontier was impossible to guard. When considering this state of affairs, it was useless to discuss the question of guilt, responsibility, &c. The fundamental fact was that neither the Sudetens nor the Slovaks nor the Poles nor the Hungarians wanted to remain in Czechoslovakia, and the Czechs were attempting by force to thwart them.

The Prime Minister said that he was both disappointed and puzzled at the Führer's statement. The Führer had said during their previous conversation that if he, the Prime Minister, could arrange for a settlement on the basis of self-determination he would be prepared then to discuss procedure. He (Mr. Chamberlain) had then expressed his personal opinion as being in favour of the principle of self-determination; he had recognised the basis of the German claim and the fact that it was not possible to expect the Sudetens to remain as citizens of Czechoslovakia. He had induced his colleagues, the French and the Czechs to agree to the principle of self-determination, in fact he had got exactly what the Führer wanted and without the expenditure of a drop of German blood. In doing so, he had been obliged to take his political life into his hands. As an illustration of the difficulties which he had had to face, he mentioned that when he undertook his first flight to Germany he was applauded by public opinion. To-day he was accused of selling the Czechs, yielding to dictators, capitulating, and so on. He had actually been booed on his departure to-day. Herr Hitler interjected that he had only been booed by the Left, and the Prime Minister replied that he did not mind what the Left thought, but that his serious difficulties came from the people in his own party, some of whom had actually written to protest to him against his policy.

Why, continued Mr. Chamberlain, were [? had] the proposals which he had made not been regarded as acceptable? It was, of course, inevitable that there

should be incidents and faults on both sides. At this point, Mr. Chamberlain read a note which he had just received to the effect that Sudeten bands supported by military had entered Eger. Herr Hitler declared that whatever the report might say, he could declare categorically that German troops had not crossed the border. It was quite out of the question.

The Prime Minister then picked up the thread of his argument and said that what he had hoped was to show the world that the orderly operation of treaty revision could be achieved by peaceful means. If the Führer had any proposal to make to this end, he would of course be pleased to consider it.

Herr Hitler declared that there was only one possibility: A frontier line must be drawn at once—he did not hold with commissions, committees, &c., he declared parenthetically—from which the Czechs must withdraw the army, police and all State organs; this area would be at once occupied by Germany. The line he proposed to draw would be that of the language frontier, based on existing reliable maps. The Czechs might declare—and from his knowledge of them would certainly declare—that his line did not represent the real minority situation. If so, he would hold a plebiscite (he did not ask for gifts, nor did he desire to steal territory which did not belong to Germany) on the basis of the situation in 1918 when the Czechs took over the territory; that is to say, the Germans who had since left the territory would be entitled to vote and the Czechs who had since been planted there would not be entitled to vote. In this he would only be following the precedent set by the Saar plebiscite. He was perfectly ready for the plebiscite to be carried out by an international plebiscite commission. The territory would be occupied by German troops at once. But international commissions could be sent out, and, since the plebiscite would not take place for some time—he mentioned October or November—there would be ample time for proper preparations to be made.

The Prime Minister asked whether the Führer really thought that it would be necessary to hold a plebiscite everywhere. Surely it would be necessary to hold one only in those areas where the issue was doubtful.

Herr Hitler replied that he was in favour of holding a plebiscite everywhere. Where the result showed a Czech majority, he would be perfectly prepared to surrender the territory which he had occupied. He did not envisage given percentages, as suggested by Mr. Chamberlain, but would bow to a majority. In any event, it would be impossible to undertake any sort of frontier delimitation until after a plebiscite. The last communal elections were held under Czech terror and could not be considered as a reliable guide. Moreover, arrangements would have to be made for the Germans who had left the territory to vote, whilst the Czechs, as stated above, who had since been planted there would not vote.

As regards the question of State property, he declared, with some heat, that the Czechs had no right whatever to indemnification, first, because the Sudetens had paid more in taxation in proportion to their numbers than the rest, and, secondly, because most of the Czech property was inherited from

the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and was the fruit, for the most part, of purely German money. The property in question could only be regarded as belonging to the inhabitants, and he must add that any destruction or removal of such property by the Czechs would be regarded by him as a breach of the agreement and he would seek suitable indemnity. To go back to the parallel of the Saar, it was a fact that the Germans had been under Czechoslovak rule approximately as long as the Saar territory had been under the League of Nations administration. The Germans had not been asked to pay the League of Nations for the territory taken over, and there was no reason why they should be asked to do so in the present case.

The Prime Minister said that he had not intended to go into this question now, but had only raised it as one of the matters which he thought would have to be considered eventually.

Herr Hitler said that, as regards the proposed guarantee, it was, of course, as far as the British guarantee was concerned, the affair of the British Government, and he had no observations to offer. But Germany would only join in such a guarantee if all Czechoslovakia's neighbours and all the Great Powers, including Italy, also agreed to join in the guarantee.

The Prime Minister said that he had not asked Germany to join in the guarantee; in fact, he had foreseen this objection, but he thought that perhaps Herr Hitler would agree to the conclusion of a non-aggression Pact with Czechoslovakia, as he had done with other countries.

Herr Hitler said that only if Czechoslovakia succeeded in placing her relations with Poland and Hungary on a proper footing could he agree. The Czechs would regard a non-aggression Pact with Germany as protecting them from any possible pressure on his part, and this would merely encourage them to flout Poland and Hungary and to maltreat the Polish and Hungarian minorities to their hearts' content. His relations with Poland and Hungary were excellent, and he did not desire to stab them in the back.

As the spokesman of Germany, he must emphasise that there were only two solutions. First, peace and the establishment of a frontier on a national basis; or secondly, a military solution, which meant a frontier not on a national but on a strategic basis. As for the remainder of Czechoslovakia, it simply did not interest Germany.

(At this point I left the room to take a message.)

The Prime Minister said that his proposed guarantee was against *unprovoked* aggression and both Great Britain and France would object to Czechoslovakia resisting legitimate claims.

Herr Hitler retorted that it was impossible to define provocation or to know who in any given case was the provoker.

The Prime Minister said that many people represented that Herr Hitler wanted to annex Czechoslovakia. He personally did not believe this, but he wished Herr Hitler to help him to prove to his critics that they were wrong.

Moreover, he, the Prime Minister, was not a party to these negotiations, but rather only a mediator seeking to achieve a peaceful solution. As it was, public opinion in England was not favourably disposed towards the proposals now under consideration, and they would be less favourably disposed if it were known that Herr Hitler was increasing his pretensions. What he would like to be able to do would be to prove that the proposed solution was fair and that the plebiscite was to be held in conditions which ensured freedom from military or other pressure. Again he asked why it was necessary to hold a plebiscite everywhere.

Herr Hitler said it was because the Czechs (and he knew them better than anyone) would question everything, and because he, Herr Hitler, wanted a plebiscite to show the Czechs how numerous were the solid blocks which did not want to stay in Czechoslovakia. Furthermore, a plebiscite would enable a fair frontier to be fixed. One would have to take into account regions rather than isolated villages. One particular village might have a Czech majority, but might have to be in a German region, and *vice versa*.

The Prime Minister asked how Herr Hitler proposed to lay down his frontier.

Herr Hitler replied that the preliminary frontier would be established on the basis of existing language maps.

(There was a short gap here owing to my absence to fetch a message for the Prime Minister.)

Herr Hitler continued that he had another demand to make, namely the immediate release of Germans from the Czech police and military forces. The Germans had called up no German citizens of Czech nationality because they reckoned on the possibility of their having to fight against their own countrymen, and this the German Government would not require of them.

The Prime Minister said he saw no difficulty in satisfying this last demand. The difficulty lay rather in the fixing of an arbitrary line by Herr Hitler, a line which seemed to him would be much further projected into Czech territory than he had anticipated and which English public opinion would not admit as fair.

Herr Hitler said that if English public opinion took that view, it was because their information was based on the Czech maps used in England.

The Prime Minister said he thought that, so far as he was aware, the German and Czech maps which they had seen in London roughly agreed.

Herr Hitler said that in any event a plebiscite would prove that the German map and the proposed German line was fair. The population maps of 1910, 1920 and 1930, as well as the latest communal elections, showed how far the Czechs had succeeded in encroaching into Sudeten territory. But under his proposal for the plebiscite, the Germans—as they had done in the Saar—would come back to vote. The following were the numbers of Ger-

mans who had left Czechoslovakia since 1918: Overseas 150,000; in Austria 400,000; in Germany 270,000. All these would be entitled to vote, whilst the 200,000 Czechs planted by the Czechoslovak Government would not be entitled to vote. This was not a revolutionary or unfair proposal. It was based on the model of the Saar plebiscite, which was evolved not by himself or by the German Government, but by high international authorities.

The Prime Minister said that the Saar plebiscite was altogether a different matter. In any event, he could only ask once more why it was necessary to resort to the cumbrous procedure of a large-scale plebiscite. He repeated that he was not here as a party, but as a mediator. He wanted to carry his country with him, and the Führer was not helping him. Under the English proposal Germany would acquire approximately about the same territory as under Herr Hitler's proposal.

Herr Hitler replied that he wanted a plebiscite because the world would see how many Germans were living in Czech territory against their will. As regards any complaints which might be used against pressure exercised by the German military, he would be prepared to give the international commissions of control full powers. The German military would have nothing whatsoever to do with the plebiscite, and, of course, the German soldiers would have no vote.

He, Herr Hitler, could only repeat that there were two solutions, namely (1) a peaceful one, and the drawing of a frontier on a national basis; (2) a military solution, which meant a military or strategic frontier.

The Prime Minister had said that his task was not easy, but his—the Chancellor's—was not easy either. The feeling of the German people was now such that if he had bowed to their wishes he would not now be negotiating for a peaceful solution. The German people would prefer a solution by force and a military or strategic frontier.

The Prime Minister replied that of course Germany could get what she wanted by the exercise of her might. But such a course would involve loss of life. Moreover, in war there was always an element of hazard, and it was difficult to see why, if Herr Hitler could obtain all that he wanted by peaceful means with complete certainty, he should elect to adopt a course which involved the loss of German lives and a certain element of risk.

Herr Hitler replied that he personally would much prefer a good understanding with England to a good military strategic frontier with Czechoslovakia.

The Prime Minister said that he would not get a good friendship with England if he resorted to force, but that he would if he agreed to achieve his aims by peaceful means.

Herr Hitler said that the decisive element was speed, because whilst they were sitting there they were at the mercy of events, and an irreparable incident could occur at any moment. His solution was the best, because it was

the quickest. After the plebiscite which would follow, he would at once return any territory which did not opt for Germany.

At this point it was agreed to inspect the map showing the line which Herr Hitler proposed to draw, based on the language boundary. [Herr von Ribbentrop, Sir Horace Wilson and Sir Nevile Henderson joined the discussions at this stage.]

Herr Hitler, in reply to a question by the Prime Minister, said that he would be prepared to abide by a bare majority vote in the plebiscite. In reply to a further question, he said that if the plebiscite showed that Germans opted for Czechoslovakia, he would only be too glad to get rid of them. He did not want such Germans in the Reich. If the Prime Minister knew the territory and the people as well as he did, he would agree that the idea of a conflict between Great Britain and Germany on account of such people was simply absurd.

The Prime Minister asked what exactly Herr Hitler meant by applying the result of the plebiscite by regions rather than by towns, villages, &c. Did he have in mind voting by communes, or what were the districts he had in mind?

At this moment Herr Hitler received a message to the effect that twelve German hostages had been shot in Eger. This led him to a disquisition on the iniquity of the Czechs, and on the difficulty he had in refraining from military action against Czechoslovakia.

The Prime Minister further sought to elucidate Herr Hitler's statement that the result of the voting would have to be considered regionally rather than locally.

Herr Hitler vociferated, in reply, that after their behaviour during the last twenty years, the Czechs had no reason to complain of any solution. The essential element, he continued, was speed. If Prague fell under Bolshevik influence, or if hostages continued to be shot, he would intervene militarily at once.

The Prime Minister reverted to the question of the plebiscite, and under pressure Herr Hitler agreed that he would have no objection to a plebiscite on both sides of the disputed border.

The Prime Minister then asked Herr Hitler if he would take steps to control the Sudetens whilst we took similar action at Prague.

Herr Hitler said that he could give instructions to his army, his S.S. and his police, and they would be obeyed. But he could not communicate with or control the hordes of refugees on the frontier. The solution was for the Czechs to withdraw from [*sic*] the army and police.

The Prime Minister said that if he could not appeal to the Sudetens, he would make a personal appeal to them himself.

Herr Hitler replied that this was practically impossible, since there was no Sudeten leadership, no telephonic communication and no one with whom one could get into touch. The Czechs had destroyed the whole organization, and the Sudeten refugees were now a leaderless rabble. So long as shooting affrays continued on the frontier, nothing could prevent the Sudetens from endeavouring to rescue their comrades and kith and kin involved in these affrays.

The Prime Minister said that of course it was impossible wholly to prevent these incidents; they were, indeed, inevitable. But they could do their best and appeal to Prague, and he—Herr Hitler—could appeal to such Sudeten leaders and organizations as existed.

Herr Hitler replied that he would do his best, but that it was an intolerable strain on his nerves to hold his hand in view of constant Czech provocation, when he knew that he could at any moment rout the Czechs with one armoured battalion. The friends of the shot hostages would be shouting to-night for revenge.

After further argument, Herr Hitler said that he would give instructions at once to General Keitel that no military action was to be taken. But Mr. Chamberlain must understand that the Czechs must be spoken to sharply and firmly, or an admonition would have no effect. He never believed himself that a peaceful solution could be reached, and he admitted that he never thought that the Prime Minister could have achieved what he had. That was why he had made his military preparations and Germany was ready today to move at a moment's notice.

After some further desultory discussion the Prime Minister and the Chancellor agreed to adjourn the conversation until the following day.

#### No. 1034

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 23)*

[C 10441/1941/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, PARIS, *September 22, 1938*

No. 1081.

His Majesty's Ambassador at Paris presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit to him the following report from the Military Attaché.

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 1034

*The Ambassador.*

PARIS, *September 22, 1938*

I saw General Dentz this morning. He told me that the latest information received by the French General Staff was that German troops would occupy Czechoslovakia on the 24th September. The original date had been the



28th, but on Hitler's demand, the military authorities had speeded up their preparations by four days.

Further, General Dentz said that in his opinion, when Mr. Chamberlain arrives at Godesberg he will find that the Sudeten question is no longer in the forefront, but he will be faced in addition by the demand for the return to Poland and Hungary respectively of the areas occupied by their minorities and for the occupation by Germany of the line of the White and Little Carpathians; a neutral Czech state to be established in Bohemia and demilitarised, and a Slovak state of the same nature east of the White Carpathians.

I said 'What then, since you don't intend to fight?' and went on to suggest that the situation had deteriorated since Colonel Lindbergh's visit and his stories of the German Air Force. General Dentz did not react; he merely pointed out that French cities would be laid in ruins and that they had no means of defence. They were now paying the price of years of neglect of their Air Force.

He left me with the impression that the French did *not* intend to fight, more particularly as he went on to describe the situation in South Eastern Europe as it will be after the virtual annexation of Czechoslovakia by Germany, which he appeared to regard as a 'fait accompli'.

W. FRASER  
*Colonel, Military Attaché.*

#### No. 1035

*British Delegation (Godesberg) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 23, 2.10 a.m.)

No. 1 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10411/4786/18]

GODESBERG, September 23, 1938, 2.0 a.m.

Your telegram No. 8.<sup>1</sup>

We think suspension must be maintained pending tomorrow morning's conversations.

We are in the meantime sending communication to Herr Hitler giving cogent reasons why his proposal is unacceptable and urging him in advance of the next conversation to consider alternative proposal for the maintenance of law and order. We shall of course put to Prague Government anything that emerges if it is reasonable. Meanwhile Herr Hitler has given me assurance as to his forces not crossing the border on which I think we can rely. This last fact must not be made public.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1031.

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson<sup>1</sup> (Godesberg)*

*No. 9 Telegraphic [C 10489/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 23, 1938, 2.20 a.m.*

I have this evening received from the French Embassy without comment or covering note an account of the conversation between Dr. Benes and the French Minister at 8.30 a.m. on September 21 (see Prague telegram No. 672<sup>2</sup>).

After stating that Czech reply would be an acceptance Dr. Benes drew attention to following points:—

1. When Czech Government had promised equal treatment to Polish and Hungarian minorities it had been a question of autonomy within the state. French Government should therefore oppose Polish and Hungarian claims which would reduce Czech people to despair and provoke war.

2. Transfer of territory should be effected by Czech Government to the international commission.

3. President counted on French and British Governments making sure from German Government that no invasion occurred since territories remained Czech until transfer.

4. During negotiations and execution of Franco-British proposals Benes demanded a guarantee against German invasion.

5. Having accepted those proposals President considered that French and British guarantee was already in force as regards reduced Czechoslovak territory.

6. Benes demanded that the Reich's guarantee be negotiated by France and Great Britain and expected Germany to assume engagements towards Czechoslovakia at least equal to her engagements to Belgium.

7. Benes counted on France and Great Britain to defend Czechoslovakia if Hitler rejected Franco-British proposals.

8. The text of the proposals was too imprecise and President did not wish it communicated to Hitler in its present state. British and French General Staffs should be consulted with a view to obtaining more precise texts. It was important to save as many as possible of the costly Czech fortifications.

Benes also emphasized that proposed transfer took no account of vital necessities of Czech state from economic point of view and that of communications. He particularly feared German stranglehold across Czechoslovakia west of Brinn.

Finally Benes pressed strongly that above comments should be communicated to you so that you might take them into account in your talks with Hitler.

I am accordingly passing them to you at once without waiting to enquire why such comments, which affect His Majesty's Government equally with

<sup>1</sup> This telegram appears to be a message addressed to the Prime Minister.

<sup>2</sup> No. 996.

French Government, were not made also to Mr. Newton or whether they are in any way affected by subsequent terms of Czech acceptance.

Repeated to Prague and Berlin.

**No. 1037**

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 23, 3.25 a.m.)*  
*No. 694 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10492/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 23, 1938

Your telegram No. 318.<sup>1</sup>

The maintenance of order in Czechoslovak Government's political sphere clearly presents the most immediate problem. I have no doubt that Czech authorities would be perfectly capable of doing so if they were not subjected to incursion of armed bands, whether of Sudeten or Reich origin, from Reich . . .<sup>2</sup> and to intensive anti-Czech propaganda in the press and wireless. The most equitable arrangement for our (? protection)<sup>2</sup> here calculated to save us from bloodshed and all that it may entail would be for Herr Hitler to hold his men and propaganda off until new arrangements have been brought into force which should of course be done with the least possible delay. In the meantime order would be maintained by Czechoslovak authorities. I submit that having now secured for Herr Hitler all and more than he has hitherto asked for we are entitled to insist that he should make at least that small contribution to European peace.

If such an appeal to him were to fail situation would not in my opinion be met by mere withdrawal of Czech police, which in itself seems to be of small importance. With the possible exception of an international force I see no half-way house between a Czech and a German administrative authority and pending further instructions I am refraining from approaching M. Benes in the sense suggested in paragraph 2 of your telegram.

My reasons for definitely precluding alternative of a German administrative authority are that the Czech<sup>3</sup> Government, in accordance with feeling in the country, have made it a cornerstone of their policy to defend their frontiers and integrity of the State during transitional period. It would moreover be entirely unreasonable on military grounds to press for a withdrawal of troops from their frontiers as this would gravely endanger their security.

You will realise too that having just persuaded the Czechoslovak Government to make a supreme and unprecedented sacrifice it would be highly dictatorial as well as unjustifiable to ask now for a further sacrifice. It might well lead to an overthrow of the Government, wreck the coming negotiations and precipitate war.

Apart from possibility of international expedition, on which I will comment

<sup>1</sup> No. 1003.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>3</sup> The word 'Czech' is written in pencil in the text as a suggested amendment to the word 'delegate' in the file copy of this telegram.

later, only practicable solution would appear to be for administration only to change hands when delimitation of frontier has been finally settled.

Repeated to Berlin, Paris and Godesberg.

No. 1038

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris) and Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 315<sup>1</sup> Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10511/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 23, 1938, 11.15 a.m.*

I had a telephone conversation last night at 10.30 with the Prime Minister at Godesberg.

The Prime Minister said that his interview with Herr Hitler had been most unsatisfactory. Herr Hitler had regarded the Anglo-French plan as unacceptable on the ground that its operation would be too slow.

Herr Hitler had been insisting that German troops should occupy the Sudetenland up to a line to be agreed upon, and considerable discussion had ensued upon the line. In fact it corresponded very closely to the line we have been examining.

When that had been done Herr Hitler agreed that the final line of demarcation should be settled with an international commission.

The Prime Minister had told Herr Hitler that this would not do, but he feared that he had been unable yet to make Herr Hitler appreciate that British and French opinion could not accept this solution. He very much feared that he had not been able yet to make that sufficiently clear to Herr Hitler, and he was considering writing him a letter tonight with a view to putting this beyond all doubt. He might then have to return tomorrow. He was, however, still reflecting on the wisdom of this course of action, and the present arrangements were that he was to meet Herr Hitler again at 11.30 tomorrow morning.

I have read out to the French Ambassador the substance of this conversation, as well as the text of the Prime Minister's statement for the Press<sup>2</sup> which appears in this morning's newspapers. I also hinted that the Prime Minister had reason to believe last night that Hitler would take no precipitate action immediately.

<sup>1</sup> No. 315 to Paris; No. 337 to Prague.

<sup>2</sup> The reference appears to be to the *communiqué* issued by the British Delegation at Godesberg on the evening of September 22, which ran: 'The Prime Minister had a conversation with the German Führer, which, beginning at 4 o'clock, was continued until shortly after 7 p.m. It is intended to resume the conversations tomorrow morning.'

<sup>3</sup> In the meantime the first essential in the opinion of the Prime Minister is that there should be a determination on the part of all parties and on the part of all concerned to ensure that the local conditions in Czechoslovakia are such as not in any way to interfere with the progress of the conversations.

'The Prime Minister appeals most earnestly therefore to everybody to assist in maintaining a state of orderliness and to refrain from action of any kind that would be likely to lead to incidents.'

No. 1039

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 23, 12.25 p.m.)  
*No. 282 Telegraphic [C 10471/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 23, 1938, 11.15 a.m.

I have informed Ministry of Foreign Affairs of first paragraph *only* of Godesberg telegram No. 1.<sup>1</sup>

Repeated to Prague and Godesberg.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1035.

No. 1040

*British Delegation (Godesberg) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 23, 11.45 a.m.)  
*No. 2 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10469/1941/18]*

GODESBERG, September 23, 1938

Following is briefly the situation after yesterday's conversation:—

Herr Hitler takes line that the only way of preserving order and preventing situation degenerating into disorder is for Germany to occupy Sudeten territory by German military forces. Boundary he proposes is based on a language map and he has so drawn it as to give the most favourable results to Germany.

In reply to objection that his boundary gives Germany too much territory he replies that he is willing that within two or three months a plebiscite should be held under international supervision, as in the Saar case, and he is prepared to return to Czechoslovakia areas which show a majority against incorporation in the Reich.

Failing acceptance of his proposals, which he describes as a peaceful solution, he intimates that he will be obliged to seek a military solution and in that event he will draw, not 'a national frontier' but a 'military and strategic frontier'.

I intend . . .<sup>1</sup>

Repeated to Paris, Berlin and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> A note to the text of this telegram reads: 'Telegram apparently incomplete.' The telegram was subsequently corrected to read: 'I intend at this morning's meeting to present strongly the objections to proposal for military occupation of Sudeten territory.'

No. 1041

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

*No. 317 Telegraphic [C 10491/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 25,*<sup>1</sup> *1938, 12.30 p.m.*

I have just received a message<sup>2</sup> from the British Delegation at Godesberg to say that the Prime Minister wrote a letter to Herr Hitler last night and that they have now been informed that Herr Hitler will reply in writing. The meeting fixed for this morning has therefore been postponed till later. Two telegrams from Godesberg are also now on the way, which will bring further information on the present situation.

<sup>1</sup> In error for September 23.

<sup>2</sup> See No. 1038. It is not clear from the sequence of telegrams when this later message was received.

No. 1042

*Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received September 23, 1.0 p.m.)*

*No. 514 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10498/1941/18]*

BERLIN, *September 23, 1938*

French Ambassador asked me to go to him this morning. He enquired for news of Godesberg and I gave him since-published communiqué.<sup>1</sup>

He is pessimistic regarding the outcome of the Prime Minister's visit and expressed the opinion which he has no doubt reported to Paris that war between Czechoslovakia and Germany is inevitable and that Germany would march on September 24. He said zero hour had been fixed to coincide with experimental air raid precaution exercises in Berlin about ten days ago which had at the last moment been postponed in view of Prime Minister's impending visit to Berchtesgaden. He is much disturbed at re-erection of anti-aircraft guns on building next door to French Embassy last night outside which Air Force vehicles are parked.

He also expressed opinion with which I agree that press is working public opinion up to the idea that Germany and her Sudeten brethren are to be the victims of Czech Bolshevik aggression consequently intervention is essential in self-protection.

Repeated to Paris, Prague and Godesberg.

<sup>1</sup> See No. 1038, note 2.

**No. 1043**

*Viscount Halifax to United Kingdom Delegation (Geneva)*

*No. 54 Telegraphic [C 10667/5302/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 23, 1938, 1.15 p.m.*

Following for Mr. Butler:

It would be useful if you would have a conversation with M. Litvinov on the present situation, and endeavour to elicit from him anything concerning the views and intentions of his Government.

Line on which you might open conversation would be that, as he knows, His Majesty's Government and French Government have been authorised by Czech Government to discuss with German Government extent and method of transfer to the Reich of Sudeten territory. On the face of it, German and Sudeten demand for such transfer is not easy to resist in theory, however difficult it may have been for Czech Government to bring themselves to such a decision.

Mr. Chamberlain is making a supreme effort at Godesberg to secure a just and reasonable agreement on means of effecting transfer, which would safeguard the interests of those of the population who do not wish to remain in transferred territory and enable others who might so wish, to settle in it. This represents a great effort to remove a German grievance, and will constitute a test of German sincerity.

If after this German Government refuse to co-operate in such a settlement and resort to direct methods leading to Czech resistance and war, this will inevitably have deep and immediate effect upon public opinion both in France and here. It would be useful if you could obtain from M. Litvinov any precise indication of what action Soviet Government would take in event of Czechoslovakia being thus involved in war with Germany, and at what point they would be prepared to take it.

Repeated to Paris and Moscow.

**No. 1044**

*Viscount Halifax to British Delegation (Godesberg)*

*No. 12 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10411/4786/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 23, 1938, 1.40 p.m.*

In light of your information and ours, we are profoundly disturbed at first paragraph of your telegram No. 1,<sup>1</sup> and we feel that this decision must now be reversed.

We propose to make necessary communication in this sense at 3 p.m. today.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1035.

No. 1045

*British Delegation (Godesberg) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 23, 2.0 p.m.)

No. 3 Telegraphic: by wireless [C 10491/1941/18]

GODESBERG, September 23, 1938

Following from Prime Minister.

My telegram No. 1.<sup>1</sup>

I addressed letter to Herr Hitler this morning for text of which see my immediately following telegram.<sup>2</sup> In reply I have received a message from him saying that he will send me written answer. There will be no meeting this morning.

If as seems likely the reply is a re-statement of yesterday's attitude my present view is that I should say that I will place his proposal before the Czechoslovak Government returning myself for consultation with my colleagues.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1035.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1048.

No. 1046

*Sir N. Henderson (Godesberg) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 23, 2.0 p.m.)

Unnumbered. Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10493/4786/18]

GODESBERG, September 23, 1938

In reply to your No. 12.<sup>1</sup>

'We expect reply to this morning's letter at any moment and think you should wait a little longer before making the communication.

'In any event communication should point out that such action by them may very well precipitate action by others.

'We shall telephone as soon as we have the answer we are expecting.'

<sup>1</sup> No. 1044.

No. 1047

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax* (Received September 23, 2.0 p.m.)  
No. 284 Telegraphic: by wireless [C 10495/4786/18]

PARIS, September 23, 1938

Godesberg telegram No. 1.<sup>1</sup>

M. Daladier has sent me a message through M. Léger asking whether the moment has not now come for us to cancel advice we gave Czechoslovak Government not to mobilize. He feels that if things have gone badly at Godesberg we shall incur a terrible responsibility in not withdrawing this advice.

Repeated to Godesberg and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1035.



*British Delegation (Godesberg) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 23, 2.10 p.m.)

No. 4 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10497/1941/18]

GODESBERG, September 23, 1938

Following from the Prime Minister.

Following is text of letter referred to in my immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

'I think it may clarify the situation and accelerate our conversation if I send you this note before we meet this morning.

'2. I am ready to put to the Czechoslovak Government your proposal as to areas so that they may examine the suggested provisional boundary. So far as I can see there is no need to hold a plebiscite for the bulk of the areas i.e. for those areas which (according to statistics upon which both sides seem to agree) are predominantly Sudeten German areas. I have no doubt however that Czech Government would be willing to accept your proposal for a plebiscite to determine how far if at all proposed new frontier need be (? adjusted).<sup>2</sup>

'3. The difficulty I see about the proposal you put to me yesterday afternoon arises from the suggestion that areas should in the immediate future be occupied by German troops. I recognise the difficulty of conducting a lengthy investigation under the existing conditions and (? doubt whether)<sup>2</sup> plan you propose would if it were acceptable provide an immediate easing of the tension. But I do not think you have realised the impossibility of my agreeing to put forward any plan unless I have reason to suppose it will be considered by public opinion in my country, in France and indeed in the world generally as carrying out the principles agreed upon in an orderly fashion and freedom [*sic*] from threat of force. I am sure that an attempt to occupy forthwith by German troops the areas which will become part of the Reich at once in principle and very shortly afterwards by delimitation would be condemned as an unnecessary display of force.

'4. Even if I felt it right to put this proposal to the Czechoslovak Government I am convinced they would not regard it as being in spirit of (? arrangement)<sup>2</sup> which we and the French Government urged them to accept and which they have accepted. In the event of German troops moving into areas as you propose there is no doubt that Czechoslovak Government would have no option but to order their forces to resist and this would mean destruction of basis upon which you and I a week ago agreed to work together namely an orderly settlement of this question rather than a settlement by use of force.

'5. It being agreed in principle that Sudeten German areas are to join the Reich the immediate question before us is how to maintain law and order pending final settlement of arrangements for transfer. There must surely be alternatives to your proposal which would not be open to objections

<sup>1</sup> No. 1045.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

I have pointed out. For instance I could ask Czechoslovak Government whether they think there could be an arrangement under which maintenance of law and order in certain agreed Sudeten German areas would be entrusted to Sudeten Germans themselves by creation of a suitable force or by use of forces already in existence possibly acting under supervision of neutral observers.

'6. As you know I did last night in accordance with my understanding with you urge Czechoslovak Government to do all in their power to maintain order in the meantime.

'7. Czechoslovak Government cannot of course withdraw their forces nor can they be expected to withdraw State police so long as they are faced with prospect of forcible invasion: but I should be ready at once to ascertain their views on alternative suggestion I have made and if the plan proved acceptable I would urge them to withdraw their forces and State police from areas where Sudeten Germans are in a position to maintain order.

'8. Further steps that need to be taken to complete transfer could be worked out quite rapidly.'

#### No. 1049

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 339 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10495/4786/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 23, 1938, 4.0 p.m.*

My telegram No. 331<sup>1</sup> and Paris telegram No. 284<sup>2</sup> to Foreign Office.

You are at liberty to make communication. In doing so however Prime Minister thinks it should be pointed out that such action may very well precipitate action by others and therefore Czech Government may think it well to avoid unnecessary publicity.

Repeated to Paris and Godesberg.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1027.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1047.

#### No. 1050

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Godesberg)*<sup>1</sup>  
*No. 14 Telegraphic: [? by telephone] [C 10675/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 23, 1938, 4.30 p.m.*

We are sure that you have in mind the necessity of a period of at least some days for precautionary stage which includes measures such as mobilisation, before entry into hostilities. If you are anticipating a breakdown in your negotiations will you consider whether some Cabinet action authorising further precautionary steps should not be taken forthwith. You would have

<sup>1</sup> This telegram appears to be a message addressed to the Prime Minister.

to leave us discretion as to the exact steps to be taken but until mobilisation is ordered the defences against air attack cannot be ready. If you are returning at once, it may well be that you prefer no further precautionary steps beforehand.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> For the reply to this telegram see No. 1057, note 1.

### No. 1051

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

*No. 321 Telegraphic [C 10665/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 23, 1938, 6.5 p.m.*

Please endeavour to obtain statement from French Government as to what would be their attitude if, in spite of attempt we are making to bring about peaceful solution, Germany were to invade Czechoslovakia and met with resistance.

Have French Government been able to obtain any indication of extent and manner of assistance Soviet Government might give to Czechoslovakia?

Your own impression of feeling in political circles and public opinion would also be valuable. Military Attaché may be able to obtain views of General Staff.

### No. 1052

*British Delegation (Godesberg) to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 6 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10505/1941/18]*

GODESBERG, *September 23, 1938*

Addressed to Prague telegram No. 6.<sup>1</sup>

My telegram No. 4<sup>2</sup> to Foreign Office.

Following from the Prime Minister.

Herr Hitler's reply to letter which I addressed to him this morning maintains without any modification demands which he put forward last night, except in so far as he agrees to removal of German troops from doubtful areas when vote is taken in them.

2. These demands may be summed up as insisting on immediate withdrawal of Czech military, police and other authorities from Sudeten areas as shown in (? our own)<sup>3</sup> map and subsequent occupation of these areas by German army.

3. I am requesting Herr Hitler to furnish written (? memorandum)<sup>3</sup> of his exact demands together with copy of map and these if received will be furnished to you, if possible by air tomorrow.

4. I am informing Herr Hitler that I see no other course open to me now

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was addressed to Prague as No. 6 and repeated by telephone as No. 6 to the Foreign Office, where it was received on September 23 at 7.35 p.m.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1048.

<sup>3</sup> The text is here uncertain.

except to forward these German proposals to Prague and to return myself to London. In making this communication to Herr Hitler I am asking him for an assurance that pending the receipt of Czech reply no action should be taken by forces of the Reich Government in Sudeten territory to prejudice any further mediation which may be found possible.

You should notify Czechoslovak Government as instructed and take this opportunity to make communication in the terms of deferred instructions relative to mobilization. Communication contained in Foreign Office telegram to you No. 331<sup>4</sup> should include statement at the end of that. . . .<sup>5</sup> The Czechoslovak Government must bear in mind announcement of their mobilisation may well entail immediate order to German army to attack Czechoslovakia.

Repeated to the Foreign Office No. 6, and Paris.

<sup>4</sup> No. 1027.

<sup>5</sup> The text is here uncertain.

### No. 1053

*British Delegation (Godesberg) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 23, 7.45 p.m.)

*No. 5 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10504/1941/18]*

GODESBERG, September 23, 1938

Following from Prime Minister:—

My telegram No. 3.<sup>1</sup>

Following is translation of Herr Hitler's reply received<sup>2</sup> this afternoon.

Begins:

Your Excellency,

A thorough examination of your letter which reached me today as well as the necessity of clearing up the situation definitely led [lead] me to make the following communication.

For nearly two decades the Germans as well as various other nationalities in Czechoslovakia have been maltreated in the most unworthy manner, brutalised, economically destroyed, and above all prevented from realising for themselves also the right of the nation to self-determination. All attempts of the oppressed to change their lot failed in the face of the brutal will to destruction of the Czechs. The latter were in possession of the power of the State and did not hesitate to employ it ruthlessly and barbarically. England and France have never made an endeavour to alter this situation. In my speech before the Reichstag of the 22nd February I declared that the German Reich would take the initiative in putting an end to any further oppression of these Germans. I have in a further declaration during the Reich Party Congress given a clear and unmistakable expression to this decision. I recognise gratefully that at last, after twenty years, the British

<sup>1</sup> No. 1045.

<sup>2</sup> This letter was sent to Mr. Chamberlain by Herr Hitler about 3.35 p.m.

Government, represented by Your Excellency, have now decided for its [their] part also to undertake steps to put an end to a situation which from day to day and indeed from hour to hour is becoming more unbearable. For, if formerly the behaviour of the Czechoslovak Government was brutal, it can only be described during recent weeks and days as madness. The victims of this madness are innumerable Germans. In a few weeks the number of refugees who have been driven out has risen to over a hundred and twenty thousand. This situation, as stated above, is unbearable and will now be terminated by me.

Your Excellency assures me now that the principle of the transfer of the Sudeten territory to the Reich has in principle already been accepted. I regret to have to reply to Your Excellency as regards this point, the theoretical recognition of principles has also been formally granted to us Germans. In the year 1918 the armistice was concluded on the basis of the fourteen points of President Wilson, which in principle were recognised by all. They were however in practice broken in the most shameful way. What interests me Your Excellency is not the recognition of the principle that this territory is to go to Germany, but solely the realisation of this principle, and the realisation which put[s] an end in the shortest time to the sufferings of the unhappy victims of Czech tyranny and at the same time corresponds to the dignity of a great Power. I can only emphasise to Your Excellency that these Sudeten Germans are not going back to the German Reich in virtue of the gracious or benevolent sympathy of other nations, but on the ground of their own will based on the right of self-determination of the nation, and of the irrevocable decision of the German Reich to give effect to this will. It is however for a nation an unworthy demand to have such a recognition made dependent on conditions which are not provided for in treaties nor are practical in view of the shortness of the time.

I have with the best intentions and in order to give the Czech nation no justifiable cause for complaint, proposed—in the event of a peaceful solution—as the future frontier that nationalities frontier which I am convinced represents a fair adjustment between the two racial groups, taking also into account the continued existence of large language islands.

I am [in addition]<sup>3</sup> ready to allow plebiscites to be taken in whole territory which will enable subsequent corrections to be made in order—so far as it is possible—to meet real will of people concerned. I have [undertaken to] accept these corrections in advance. I have moreover declared myself ready to allow this plebiscite to take place under control either of international commissions or of a mixed German-Czech commission. [I am finally] ready during days of plebiscite to withdraw our troops from most of disputed frontier areas, subject to condition that Czechs do [the same]. I am, however, not prepared to allow a territory which must be considered as belonging to Germany on the ground of will of people, and of recognition granted even by Czechs, to be left without protection of the Reich. There is here no inter-

<sup>3</sup> These and other words in square brackets are subsequent corrections of the text which was indecipherable at these points in the original telegram. See Cmd. 5847 of 1938, No. 4.

national power or agreement which would have the right to take precedence over German right.

The idea of being able to entrust to Sudeten Germans alone maintenance of order is practically impossible in consequence of obstacles put [in the] way [of their] political organisation in the course of last decade and particularly in recent times. As much as in the interests of tortured, because defenceless, population, as well as with regard to duties and prestige of Reich, it is impossible for us to refrain from giving immediate protection to this territory.

Your Excellency assures me it is now impossible for you to propose such a plan to your own Government.

May I assure you for my part that it is impossible for me to justify any other attitude to the German people. Since for England it is a question at most of political imponderable[s] whereas, for Germany, it is a question of primitive right, and the security of more than three million human beings and the national honour of a great people.

I fail to understand observation of Your Excellency that it would not be possible for Czechoslovak Government to withdraw their forces so long as they were obliged to reckon with possible invasion, since precisely by means of this solution grounds for any forcible action are to be removed.

Moreover, I cannot conceal from Your Excellency that the great mistrust with which I am inspired leads me to believe that the acceptance of the principle of the transfer of Sudeten Germans to the Reich by the Czech Government is only given in the hope thereby to win time so as, by one means or another, to bring about a change in contradiction to this principle. For if the proposal that these territories are to belong to Germany is sincerely accepted, there is no ground to postpone the practical resolution of this principle. My knowledge of Czech practice in such matters over a period of long years compels me to assume the insincerity of Czech assurances so long as they are not implemented by practical proof. The German Reich is however determined by one means or another to terminate these attempts which have lasted for decades to deny by dilatory methods the legal claims of oppressed people.

Moreover the same attitude applies to the other nationalities in this State. They also are the victims of long oppression and violence. In their case also every assurance given hitherto has been broken. In their case also attempts have been made by dilatory dealing with their complaints or wishes to win time in order to be able to oppress them still more subsequently. These nations also, if they are to achieve their rights, will sooner or later have no alternative but to secure them for themselves. Conceivably Germany if as it now appears to be the case should find it impossible to have clear rights of Germans in Czechoslovakia accepted by way of negotiation, is determined to exhaust the other possibilities [which] then alone remain open to her.

Repeated to Paris No. 5 and Prague No. 5.

No. 1054

*British Delegation (Godesberg) to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

No. 7 *Telegraphic: by telephone* [C 10506/1941/18]

GODESBERG, September 23, 1938

Addressed to Paris No. 7.<sup>1</sup>

Following from Prime Minister:—

My telegram No. 4<sup>2</sup> to Foreign Office.

For text of Herr Hitler's reply to my letter see my telegram No. 5<sup>3</sup> to Foreign Office. I am replying<sup>4</sup> asking for memorandum of proposals, so that I may communicate them to Czechoslovak Government and for assurance that there will be no action by forces of the Reich in the meantime, particularly in Sudeten areas, prejudicial to any further mediation that may be found possible. I am adding it is necessary for me to report position to my colleagues and to the French Government and that accordingly I am returning to London.

2. Please communicate position to French Government. I am instructing His Majesty's Minister at Prague to communicate to Czechoslovak Government summary of proposals as described to me orally yesterday as stated in today's correspondence. I am also instructing His Majesty's Minister at Prague to make a communication contained in Foreign Office telegram No. 331<sup>5</sup> to Prague, adding it should be pointed out that a decision to mobilise may precipitate action by Germany.

Repeated to the Foreign Office No. 7 and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was addressed to Paris and repeated by telephone as No. 7 to the Foreign Office, where it was received on September 23 at 7.45 p.m.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1048.

<sup>3</sup> No. 1053.

<sup>4</sup> For the text of Mr. Chamberlain's reply, see No. 1057.

<sup>5</sup> No. 1027.

No. 1055

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 23, 9.15 p.m.)*

No. 712 *Telegraphic: [? by telephone]* [C 10566/4786/18]

PRAGUE, September 23, 1938

Your telegram No. 339.<sup>1</sup>

I acted accordingly immediately on its being decyphered. I then informed my French colleague who had not yet received similar instructions, but had authority to act forthwith on learning of my instructions.

Repeated to Paris and Godesberg.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1049.

No. 1056

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 24, 9.30 a.m.,  
No. 286 Telegraphic [C 10586/5302/18])*

PARIS, September 23, 1938, 9.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 319.<sup>1</sup>

See my telegram No. 250<sup>2</sup> of September 14.

M. Litvinov said Russia would only come in after France had already come in, and that she would request Council of the League to recommend Roumania to allow passage of Russian aeroplanes over Roumanian territory.

M. Bonnet is not much impressed by this prospective late and limited Russian help. He now further fears Poland would also be on the wrong side in the event of war.

Repeated to Geneva.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram instructed Sir E. Phipps to inform the French Government of the lines on which Mr. Butler had been instructed to speak to M. Litvinov (see No. 1043) and to ask whether the French Government had themselves elicited anything definite from M. Litvinov.

<sup>2</sup> No. 874.

No. 1057

*British Delegation (Godesberg) to Viscount Halifax  
(Received September 24, 4.0 p.m.)*

*Unnumbered Saving: Telegraphic [C 10593/1941/18]*

GODESBERG, September 24, 1938<sup>1</sup>

Following from Prime Minister:

Following is text of letter which I addressed to Herr Hitler this afternoon,<sup>2</sup> begins:

I have received Your Excellency's communication in reply to my letter of this morning,<sup>2</sup> and have taken note of its contents.

In my capacity as intermediary, it is evidently now my duty—since Your Excellency maintains entirely the position you took last night—to put your proposals before the Czechoslovak Government.

Accordingly, I request Your Excellency to be good enough to let me have a memorandum which sets out these proposals, together with a map showing the area proposed to be transferred, subject to the result of the proposed plebiscite.

On receiving this memorandum I will at once forward it to Prague and

<sup>1</sup> This telegram is dated 'September 24' but it appears to have been drafted on September 23. The telegram was brought by bag to the Foreign Office. At 9.55 p.m. on September 23 a telegram from Sir N. Henderson (Godesberg telegram No. 8) was received by telephone containing the following message from the Prime Minister: 'Your telegram No. 14 [No. 1050]. We propose to leave early tomorrow morning. Decision as to further step might await arrival.'

<sup>2</sup> i.e. September 23.



request the reply of the Czechoslovak Government at the earliest possible moment.

In the meantime, until I can receive their reply, I should be glad to have Your Excellency's assurance that you will continue to abide by the understanding, which we reached at our meeting on September 14th and again last night, that no action should be taken, particularly in the Sudeten territory, by the forces of the Reich to prejudice any further mediation which may be found possible.

Since the acceptance or refusal of Your Excellency's proposal is now a matter for the Czechoslovak Government to decide, I do not see that I can perform any further service here, whilst on the other hand it has become necessary that I should at once report the present situation to my colleagues and to the French Government. I propose, therefore, to return to England. Ends.

Repeated by Foreign Office to Prague No. 349 and Paris No. 324.

**No. 1058**

*Viscount Halifax to British Delegation (Godesberg)*  
*Unnumbered. Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10664/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 23, 1938, 10.0 p.m.

Following for Prime Minister from Lord Halifax.

It may help you if we give you some indication of what seems predominant public opinion as expressed in press and elsewhere. While mistrustful of our plan but prepared perhaps to accept it with reluctance as alternative to war, great mass of public opinion seems to be hardening in sense of feeling that we have gone to limit of concession and that it is up to the Chancellor to make some contribution. We, of course, can imagine immense difficulties with which you are confronted but from point of view of your own position, that of Government, and of the country, it seems to your colleagues of vital importance that you should not leave without making it plain to Chancellor if possible by special interview that, after great concessions made by Czechoslovak Government, for him to reject opportunity of peaceful solution in favour of one that must involve war would be an unpardonable crime against humanity.

**No. 1059**

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 23, 10.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 709 Telegraphic: by wireless [C 10523/65/18]*

PRAGUE, September 23, 1938

4.45 p.m. (? The)<sup>1</sup> President has just telephoned to me to say that he has just received information which he regards as very reliable of concentrations

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.

of German police regiments who are [*sic*, ? for] occupying and organizing regions conquered by troops, as was done in Austria. Three such regiments are said to be in Bavaria and three in Dresden.

While (? not)<sup>2</sup> sure of specific numbers involved he believes fact of their concentration to be an indication that situation is very critical and he fears coming week-end may be particularly so.

He begged me to remind you that Czechoslovak Government had been advised from London and Paris to refrain from mobilization, and pointed out in what a difficult position they would be if attacked. He begged me that he might be kept informed of any information reaching His Majesty's Government indicating that danger is imminent.

While the above was being drafted I received your telegram No. 339<sup>3</sup> on which I am acting immediately.

Repeated to Godesberg, Berlin and Paris.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>3</sup> No. 1049.

#### No. 1060

*British Delegation (Godesberg) to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 8<sup>1</sup> Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10507/1941/18]*

GODESBERG, *September 23, 1938*

Addressed to Prague No. 8.

You should inform Czech Government that as result of letter I have addressed to Herr Hitler it is expected that memorandum will be available later tonight setting out German proposals. I shall telegraph text tonight, sending maps by air tomorrow. Czech Government may wish to defer decision until these particulars are available.

Repeated by Foreign Office to Prague.

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was addressed to Prague as No. 8 by the British Delegation, Godesberg, and repeated by telephone as No. 9 to the Foreign Office. The date and time of receipt are wrongly given on the copy in the Foreign Office archives as September 24, 1.30 a.m. It has been impossible from documents in these archives to establish the time, except that it was shortly before 10.45 p.m. on September 23. Cf. No. 1061.

#### No. 1061

*Viscount Halifax to British Delegation (Godesberg)*

*No. 15 Telegraphic: [? by telephone] [C 10507/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 23, 1938, 10.45 p.m.*

Addressed to Godesberg, No. 15.

Your telegram No. 9<sup>1</sup> of September 23rd.

We presume 'particulars' in last sentence refers to map, and that 'decision' refers to decision on memorandum.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1060.

We hope 'decision' does not refer to decision on mobilization. It would seem desirable that this point should be made clear in Prague.

Repeated to Prague No. 341.

#### No. 1062

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 23, 11.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 715 Telegraphic: by wireless [C 10524/4786/18]*

PRAGUE, September 23, 1938

Prime Minister's telegram No. 6<sup>1</sup> to Prague last paragraph and your telegram No. 339.<sup>2</sup>

I acted accordingly immediately on the receipt of above telegrams. I have just been informed that the Czechoslovak Government have decided that they must forthwith mobilize.<sup>3</sup>

Repeated to Godesberg only.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1052.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1049.

<sup>3</sup> A translation of the mobilization order was received by the Foreign Office in a telegram from Mr. Newton on September 24 at 7.30 p.m.

#### No. 1063

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 23, 11.45 p.m.)*  
*No. 710 Telegraphic: by wireless [C 10569/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 23, 1938

My telegram No. 694.<sup>1</sup>

I desire to reiterate emphatically that if Germany will honestly desist from provocation and propaganda the Czechoslovak authorities are well able to maintain order and justice and prevent persecution in Sudeten country during the transitional period. On the other hand if Germany declines to give evidence of good faith by genuinely desisting, it will be a reason the more why Czechoslovak Government should decline to weaken its position.

Since therefore it can hardly be expected that Government will expose their country to the consequences of German bad faith by admitting German forces in advance of an agreement and such safeguards as are contemplated in Anglo-French proposals, the only practicable as well as equitable alternative to maintenance of order by Czechoslovak Government would be an international force. If small and neutral Power could be persuaded to undertake the task, such a force might conceivably be acceptable to Czechoslovak Government. If it were undertaken by the Great Powers other than Germany but including Italy Czech acceptance seems to me improbable. If it were undertaken by Great Britain alone or by an Anglo-French force, Czechs

<sup>1</sup> No. 1037.

might be very glad of such a guarantee of fair treatment, although cannot be at all sure of this in view of shock which we have just administered. In absence of any soundings, foregoing . . .<sup>2</sup> must however be regarded not as an opinion but merely as a speculative suggestion especially as reactions of new Government<sup>3</sup> to any further proposals from us may differ from those of the late Government.

I would add that the presence of an international force for police purposes would in no way weaken Czech objection to withdrawing their troops for protection of frontier.

It is not of course for me to weigh the risks that an international force would itself incur in case of invasion.

Repeated to Godesberg No. 9, Berlin No. 279, and Paris No. 139.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>3</sup> On September 22 a new Czechoslovak Government had been formed with General Syrový as Prime Minister and Minister for War. Dr. Krofta remained Minister for Foreign Affairs.

#### No. 1064

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to British Delegation (Godesberg)*

*No. 3<sup>1</sup> Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10542/65/18]*

PARIS, September 23, 1938

Addressed to Godesberg telegram No. 3 of September 23.

I informed Minister for Foreign Affairs accordingly this evening and handed him a copy of your letter to Herr Hitler. I also read to him your telegram No. 6<sup>2</sup> to Prague.

2. M. Bonnet seemed hopeful that an arrangement might be reached whereby German troops would occupy gradually, and with consent of Czechoslovak Government, the Sudeten areas. He thinks German troops would be more likely to be able to maintain order than Czechoslovak police who will have in any case to leave eventually.

3. At this point we heard M. Benes had publicly proclaimed mobilization of Czechoslovak army. M. Bonnet felt this might have very grave consequences and cause Herr Hitler to attack.

Repeated to the Foreign Office No. 287 and Prague No. 7.

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was addressed to Godesberg as No. 3, and repeated by telephone as No. 287 to the Foreign Office, where it was received at 12.5 a.m., and to Prague as No. 7.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1052.

No. 1065

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 24,<sup>1</sup> 2.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 288 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10563/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 23, 1938

Your telegram No. 321.<sup>2</sup>

I have put to M. Bonnet question in first paragraph of above and asked him to give me reply after consulting his Government.

Question in paragraph 2 is answered in my telegrams 250<sup>3</sup> and 286<sup>4</sup> of September 14 and September 23.

Last paragraph will be answered tomorrow.

<sup>1</sup> The date of receipt of this telegram is wrongly noted as 'September 23'.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1051.

<sup>3</sup> No. 874.

<sup>4</sup> No. 1056.

No. 1066

*British Delegation (Godesberg) to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*  
*No. 10<sup>1</sup> Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10561/1941/18]*

GODESBERG, September 24, 1938

Addressed to Paris No. 10.

My telegrams to Prague Nos. 9<sup>2</sup> and 10.<sup>3</sup>

Please inform French Government of action taken at Prague and communicate to them a copy of the memorandum.

Repeated to Foreign Office No. 12.

Repeated to Prague by Foreign Office No. 345.

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was addressed to Paris as No. 10 by the British Delegation, Godesberg, and repeated by telephone as No. 12 to the Foreign Office, where it was received on September 24 at 3.0 a.m.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1070.

<sup>3</sup> No. 1068.

No. 1067

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 24, 3.5 a.m.)*  
*No. 716 Telegraphic: by wireless [C 10509/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 24, 1938

Godesberg telegram No. 9<sup>1</sup> to Foreign Office.

Please inform me immediately on receipt of reply to your telegram No. 45<sup>2</sup> to Godesberg.

In the meantime I have further informed Czechoslovak Government (see my telegram 715<sup>3</sup>) in accordance with the first two sentences of telegram under reference.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1060.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1061.

<sup>3</sup> No. 1062.

*British Delegation (Godesberg) to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 10<sup>1</sup> Telegram: by telephone [C 10761/1941/18]*

GODESBERG, September 24, 1938

Addressed to Prague No. 10<sup>1</sup> of September 23.

Following is text referred to in my immediately preceding telegram.<sup>2</sup>

*Memorandum.*

Reports which are increasing in number from hour to hour regarding incidents in the Sudetenland show that the situation has become completely intolerable for the Sudeten German people and, in consequence, a danger to the peace of Europe. It is therefore essential that the separation of the Sudetenland agreed to by Czechoslovakia should be effected without any further delay. On the attached map<sup>3</sup> the Sudeten German area which is to be ceded is shaded red. The areas in which over and above the areas which are to be occupied a plebiscite is also to be held, are drawn in and shaded green.

The final delimitation of the frontier must correspond to the wishes of those concerned. In order to determine these wishes a certain period is necessary for the preparation of the plebiscite during which disturbances must in all circumstances be prevented. A situation of parity must be created. The area designated on the attached map as a German area is to be occupied by German troops without taking account as to whether in the plebiscite there may prove to be in this or that part of the area a Czech majority. On the other hand, the Czech territory is to be occupied by Czech troops without taking account as to whether, within this area, there lie large German language islands, in which, in the plebiscite, a majority will without doubt give expression to its German national feeling.

With a view to bringing about an immediate and final solution of the Sudeten German problem the following proposals<sup>4</sup> are submitted by the German Government.

1. Withdrawal of the whole Czech armed forces, the police, the gendarmerie, the customs officials and the frontier guards from the area to be evacuated as designated on the attached map, this area to be handed over to Germany on October 1st.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was addressed to Prague as No. 10 by the British Delegation, Godesberg, and repeated by telephone as No. 11 to the Foreign Office, where it was received on September 24 at 3.15 a.m. It was repeated to Prague as No. 344 by the Foreign Office.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1070.

<sup>3</sup> See Map I at the end of this volume.

<sup>4</sup> In the text shown to Mr. Chamberlain the word 'demands' was used in this sentence; and, in the following paragraph, September 26 was laid down as the date for the commencement and September 28 for the completion of the withdrawal of Czech troops and police, and in paragraph 5 the words 'or an international' were not included. The modifications in the text were made by Herr Hitler as a result of the strongest remonstrances by Mr. Chamberlain. See No. 1073.

<sup>5</sup> In this telegram as transmitted to Prague the date appears to have read 'October 13'. See No. 1088.

2. The evacuated territory is to be handed over in its present condition (see further details in appendix). The German Government agree that a plenipotentiary representative of the Czech Government and of the Czech Army should be attached to the headquarters of the German military forces to deal with the details of the modalities for the evacuation.

3. The Czech Government discharges at once all Sudeten Germans serving in the military forces or the police anywhere in Czech State territory and permits them to return home.

4. The Czech Government liberates all political prisoners of German race.

5. The German Government agrees to permit a plebiscite to take place in those areas, which will be more definitely defined, before at latest the 25th November. Alterations to the new frontier arising out of the plebiscite will be settled by a German-Czech or an international commission.

The plebiscite itself will be carried out under the control of an international commission. All persons who were residing in the areas in question on the 28th of October 1918, or who were born in those areas prior to this date will be eligible to vote. A simple majority of all eligible male and female voters will determine the desire of the population to belong to either the German Reich or to the Czech State. During the plebiscite both parties will withdraw their military forces out of areas which will be defined more precisely. The date and duration will be settled mutually by the German and Czech Governments.

6. The German Government proposes that an authoritative German-Czech commission should be set up to settle all further details.

Godesberg, September 23rd, 1938.

#### *Appendix.*

The evacuated Sudeten German area is to be handed over without destroying or rendering unusable in any way military, economic or traffic establishments (plants). These include the ground organisation of the air service and all wireless stations.

All economic and traffic materials, especially the rolling stock of the railway system, in the designated areas, are to be handed over undamaged. The same applies to all utility services (gas-works, power stations, etc.).

Finally no foodstuffs, goods, cattle, raw materials etc. are to be removed.

Repeated to Foreign Office No. 10 and Paris No. 9.

Repeated to Prague by Foreign Office No. 344.

#### **No. 1069**

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 24, 4.10 a.m.)*

*No. 717 Telegraphic: by wireless [C 10510/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 24, 1938

When you receive text of memorandum from Godesberg referred to in their telegram No. 9<sup>1</sup> to you, please repeat to us either by telephone or wireless.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1060.

No. 1070

*British Delegation (Godesberg) to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 9<sup>1</sup> Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10560/1941/18]*

GODESBERG, September 24, 1938

Addressed to Prague No. 9<sup>1</sup> of September 23.

Following from Prime Minister:

My telegram No. 8.<sup>2</sup>

1. My immediately following telegram contains translation of memorandum handed to me at meeting with the German Chancellor tonight.

2. You should communicate the above to Czechoslovak Government intimating that I undertook to place it before them.

3. You should add that at beginning and end of a very long conversation the Chancellor in reply to a question from me intimated that proposal in this memorandum constituted his last word.

4. Map and German text of memorandum follow by air mail.

Repeated to Foreign Office No. 10 and Paris No. 8.

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was addressed to Prague as No. 9 and repeated by telephone as No. 10 to the Foreign Office, where it was received on September 24 at 10.10 a.m.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1060.

No. 1071

*United Kingdom Delegation (Geneva) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received September 24, 1.15 p.m.)*

*No. 42 Telegraphic [C 10585/5302/18]*

GENEVA, September 24,<sup>1</sup> 1938, 10.45 a.m.

Your telegram No. 54.<sup>2</sup>

Following from Mr. Butler:—

‘Lord De La Warr and I saw M. Litvinov and M. Maisky after meeting of Sixth Committee, which they were attending this evening.<sup>1</sup> During meeting of committee M. Litvinov had made a speech on the subject of Article 16, which he had concluded with a statement about Czechoslovakia, saying that Soviet Government had received an enquiry from Czechoslovak Government asking whether they would fulfil their treaty obligations. He had replied that, despite what he described as Franco-German-British ultimatum to Czechs, if Herr Hitler decided on military action and French were to honour their obligations towards Czechoslovakia and fight, the Soviet Government would come to the aid of Czechoslovakia.

‘At our interview we asked him whether he could develop further the above statement, and in particular at what point Soviet Government would be prepared to take action. He said he could say no more than that if French came to the assistance of the Czechs Russians would take action. We asked

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was drafted on September 23.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1043.



him whether he intended to raise the matter at the League, and, if so, whether he would wait to take action while the League was discussing the question. He said that they might desire to raise the matter in the League; this would not alter the proposition that he had stated, namely, that Czechoslovak-Soviet Pact would come into force. He said that he welcomed the fact that we had asked him to talk to us. He had for long been hoping for conversations between Great Britain, France and Russia, and he would like to suggest to us in this informal conversation that a meeting of the three Powers mentioned, together with Roumania and any other small Power who could be regarded as reliable, should take place away from the atmosphere of Geneva, and preferably in Paris, and so show Germans that we mean business. He said that Geneva meetings never impressed the Germans. He would be ready then to discuss military and air questions, upon which he was not posted, since he had been away from Russia for such a time. He could not therefore tell us to what extent Russian army was mobilised or air force ready to assist Czechoslovakia. He referred to rumours in German press that Russia had already provided Czechoslovakia with a certain amount of military assistance and said he could not confirm them personally.

He said he had one further statement which he himself had not made publicly which he would impart to us: Soviet Government had informed Polish Government that, in the event of Poland attacking Czechoslovakia in Teschen area, pact of non-aggression existing between Poland and Russia would automatically lapse and Russia would take action. He explained that in the eyes of his Government such pacts of non-aggression lapsed immediately the aggression took place.

In conclusion, they both expressed hope that we should continue to keep in touch at Geneva and that they would hear more about the proposal for a meeting between the Powers mentioned. M. Litvinov was pessimistic about the future, but we explained that we sincerely hoped negotiations at Godesberg would be successful, stressing that our questions related to the unhappy eventualities that might occur were this not to be so.<sup>1</sup>

Repeated to Prague, Berlin, Moscow and Paris.

#### No. 1072

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 24, 11.25 a.m.)*  
*No. 718 Telegraphic: by wireless [C 10573/1941/18]* •

PRAGUE, September 24, 1938

Godesberg No. 8<sup>1</sup> to Prague. 10.45 a.m. text referred to has not yet arrived.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1060.

NOTES OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND HERR  
HITLER AT GODESBERG, SEPTEMBER 23-4, 1938<sup>1</sup>

[C 11970/11169/18]

There were also present:

Sir Horace Wilson.

Herr von Ribbentrop.

Sir Nevile Henderson.

Herr von Weizsäcker.

Mr. Kirkpatrick.

Herr Hitler said that he and the German people gratefully thanked Mr. Chamberlain for his efforts to secure a peaceful solution of this problem. He, Herr Hitler, knew that it had been a great physical effort for Mr. Chamberlain, and that, in addition, great political courage had been required on his part. Their negotiations were perhaps difficult. But he, Mr. Chamberlain, was an Englishman, and he, Herr Hitler, came from Nieder Sachsen, so that possibly they could in the distant past claim a common ancestry. Nevertheless, however this might be, it was difficult for them to regard this problem on a common basis, for they were obliged to look at it from different angles. For England it was perhaps a matter of general policy; but for Germany it was not only a national question of life and death, but also a question of national honour. All the same, he, Herr Hitler, still entertained the hope of a peaceful solution, and he could only say that, if this happy result were achieved, it would be largely due to the Prime Minister and his efforts.

The Prime Minister said that he much appreciated the words of the Führer, and his reference to his own efforts. He had listened with hope to what Herr Hitler had said regarding the possibility of finding a peaceful solution, but perhaps Herr Hitler could tell him more about that as it had been agreed that afternoon that we were going to have a memorandum to consider.

At this point Herr von Ribbentrop produced the German memorandum, stating the German desiderata in regard to the execution of the agreement, already reached in principle, for the application of self-determination for the Sudetens.

Herr Hitler said that the memorandum represented essentially the ideas which he had expressed in his letter to Mr. Chamberlain of the 23rd September, supplemented by the verbal statements which he had made.

Herr Hitler went on to say that during the last years Germany had had a series of national problems to solve which were absolutely vital to her. Unfortunately, England in each case had been either disinterested or had taken up an attitude opposed to that of Germany, particularly so far as the press was concerned. This was the first occasion on which Germany had had a feeling that England had endeavoured to solve the problem in favour of Germany's legitimate interests. If the efforts they were now making to reach

<sup>1</sup> These notes were made by Mr. Kirkpatrick. This conversation took place during the night of September 23-4.

a peaceful solution achieved their object, it might well represent a turning point in Anglo-German relations. He added that this was the last question that remained open.

The Prime Minister said that Herr Hitler must know that it was or had been his ambition to get a peaceful solution. If it proved possible to achieve this peaceful solution—even if it were not agreeable to sections of British public opinion—he was hopeful that the agreement so reached might, as Herr Hitler had described it, be a turning point in Anglo-German relations. But he, Mr. Chamberlain, must be able to show to his people that his efforts had met with some response on the German side. He must, however, say that hitherto he had had no such response. He had been told at Berchtesgaden that if he could get the principle of self-determination accepted by the parties concerned, we could then discuss method and procedure. He had succeeded in his task, not only at home, but with the French and Czechoslovak Governments, and he thought that on his arrival at Godesberg Herr Hitler would have been prepared to discuss the application of the principle to the Sudetens. But unfortunately Herr Hitler had categorically refused to consider the proposals which he had submitted. Instead Herr Hitler had adopted the line that this and that must be done, and done quickly, including not merely the immediate cession of both the Sudeten German areas and the mixed areas, but also their occupation forthwith by German military forces.

Herr Hitler at this point interrupted the translation of the Prime Minister's remarks to interject that the English were faced with a question which they naturally regarded objectively. But this was a problem which moved Germany deeply. In analogous circumstances if Englishmen in a foreign country had been subjected to maltreatment, if England had been obliged to receive within her borders 120,000 refugees who had fled from such maltreatment, they would find it impossible to regard the problem quietly. On the contrary, they would view it with the same feelings of deep emotion and exasperation as the Germans were now doing. This state of affairs had lasted for 20 years, and he must say that they could not stand it any longer. They fully recognised and appreciated the English efforts, but for their part the English must understand that the situation demanded a quick solution. In any event, it would not be entirely fair to regard the present as a test case of German methods.

There was another point he desired to make in parenthesis. It was an error if Mr. Chamberlain thought that the Germans had not examined the English proposals. He, Herr Hitler, frankly admitted that he had had no idea originally that Mr. Chamberlain was going to fulfil the rôle of a mediator. He, Herr Hitler, had been determined to find a solution one way or another, and the methods which he had in view were very different. The latest German memorandum which had now been communicated was, in fact, the German response to English efforts; but for them it would not exist. The people here were ready, if need be, to bring about a German solution of the problem by force, and they would prefer a strategic frontier. He

repeated that the memorandum was his response to Mr. Chamberlain's efforts.

The Prime Minister, whose remarks had been interrupted by Herr Hitler's intervention, went on to say that if the memorandum only represented what Herr Hitler had said the previous day, public opinion would not be satisfied. He emphasised the risks of a solution by warlike methods and the loss and suffering to vast numbers of people without adequate cause. He could not believe that Herr Hitler would deliberately gamble away all chances of working together, the prospect of peace and a happy future for Europe merely for the sake of avoiding a delay of a few days. He, Mr. Chamberlain, was not an unreasonable person, and he understood the Führer's desire for a speedy settlement, but to rush things like this was to take fearful chances.

Herr Hitler asked what the Prime Minister meant by gambling everything away for the sake of avoiding a delay of a few days.

The Prime Minister referred to the memorandum and pointed out that it demanded that the Czech evacuation of the Sudeten area should begin on the 26th September. Apart from anything else this was a quite impracticable date. Then there followed the timetable for German occupations. The whole thing was in terms of dictation, not in terms of negotiation.

Herr Hitler retorted that he sincerely believed that the shorter the time limit the greater the chances of definite acceptance.

At this point a message was brought in to Herr von Ribbentrop, who announced in a portentous tone that M. Benes had ordered general mobilisation.

Herr Hitler said that in that event things were settled.

The Prime Minister asked why things must be regarded as settled. Mobilisation was a precaution, but not necessarily an offensive measure. He must point out that there was mobilisation on the other side also.

Herr Hitler said that when he talked of things being settled, he meant that the Czech mobilisation was a clear indication that Czechoslovakia did not intend to cede territory.

The Prime Minister dissented categorically. Czechoslovakia, he said, with the assent of the British and French Governments had agreed to the principle of self-determination, and they would not go back on it.

Herr Hitler maintained that if Czechoslovakia was sincerely determined to abide by her acceptance of the principle of self-determination, she would not mobilise.

The Prime Minister asked who mobilised first?

Herr Hitler said: The Czechs.

The Prime Minister retorted that on the contrary Germany had mobilised first; she had called up reservists and moved troops to the frontier.

Herr Hitler replied that when mobilisation was ordered here, Mr. Chamberlain would see the difference between the peace and war strength of the German army.

The Prime Minister replied that Herr Hitler had placed 1½ million men under arms, and had moved his tanks, his aeroplanes and his troops to their appropriate stations. In the circumstances it was not surprising that the Czechs felt themselves threatened. Herr Hitler might declare that he had no confidence in the Czechs, but the latter, in view of what had been done, could not be expected to have much confidence in Herr Hitler's intentions.

Herr Hitler said that he had already declared that the situation could not be held very much longer. No responsible statesman would assent to its indefinite perpetuation.

The Prime Minister agreed that there must be an early settlement.

Herr Hitler said that the attempts to get a peaceful solution had been going on now for eighteen years.

The Prime Minister said that Herr Hitler had emphasised that he was faced with an unbearable situation. He himself did not dissent. But did the Führer not think that if he decided to achieve a settlement by war, many more persons would be shot? There would be many more refugees and much more property would be irretrievably lost, even if it were only a localised war. He asked again whether the memorandum represented [Herr] Hitler's last word and whether recourse to force was worth the sacrifice when the objective was already completely within his grasp.

Herr Hitler said he would quote a German proverb to the effect that 'An end, even with terror, is better than terror without end.' He added that the memorandum did, in fact, represent his last word. But quite independently of the problem before them, he must take the appropriate military measures to meet the Czech mobilisation.

The Prime Minister said in that event there was no purpose in negotiating any further. He would go home with a heavy heart, since he saw the final wreck of all his hopes for the peace of Europe. But his conscience was clear; he had done everything possible for peace. Unfortunately, he had not found an echo in Herr Hitler.

Herr von Ribbentrop intervened to say that he did not understand what the Prime Minister meant by declaring that there was no purpose in further negotiation. The Prime Minister had that very afternoon asked for a memorandum, which he proposed to submit to the Czech Government for their immediate reply. The memorandum had now been drafted, but without even looking at it the Prime Minister had decided that the memorandum did

not represent a possible basis for a peaceful solution. That seemed to him, Herr von Ribbentrop, an altogether novel procedure.

The Prime Minister retorted that earlier in the conversation the Führer had declared that the memorandum represented essentially his earlier proposals. If, however, the Führer would consent to hold his hand until a reply was received, he would undertake to transmit the memorandum to the Czechoslovak Government.

Herr Hitler asked what exactly Mr. Chamberlain meant by the words 'hold his hand'. It would, of course, be necessary to take immediate military measures in the face of Czech mobilisation.

The Prime Minister asked what Herr Hitler meant by 'military measures'. Did this mean the invasion of Czechoslovakia?

Herr Hitler said: No, of course it did not. He had undertaken already not to invade Czechoslovakia during the negotiations, and he would abide by this undertaking.

The Prime Minister said he had understood Herr Hitler's undertaking to be a limited one, and that when he talked about taking immediate military measures he meant that the undertaking was at an end. He took note, however, of Herr Hitler's fresh assurance, which was good so far.

In the circumstances he was still willing to send the memorandum to the Czechoslovak Government and to ask them to give us an early reply. In the meantime he would not entirely give up hope of peace until it was actually broken.

Herr von Ribbentrop said that he did not altogether understand the Prime Minister's attitude. It was a fact that Czechoslovakia had agreed in principle to the cession of the Sudeten territory. Through no fault of the German Government, however, the situation had seriously deteriorated, and now came the mobilisation ordered by the Czech Government. Mr. Chamberlain complained that he had had no echo here. But what about the echo which he had received from Prague? It seemed clear that what was wanted was strong representations at Prague. There was, in fact, no difference of principle between the British, French and Czech Governments on the one hand, and the German Government on the other. The only difference lay in the fact that Herr Hitler deeply mistrusted the Czechs and wanted deeds rather than words—and quickly. The mobilisation was evidence of Czech mentality, and would lead to the very situation which the Prime Minister had been trying to avoid. Mr. Chamberlain had no reason to complain that his efforts had failed in Germany. It was at Prague that the fault lay, and it was there that quick action must be taken.

Sir Horace Wilson, who meanwhile had been perusing the German memorandum, called attention to the fact that it provided for a detailed timetable for the Czech evacuation of the Sudeten districts and for the immediate

occupation by German troops, with dates and even hours. The evacuation must begin on the 26th September and be completed by the 28th.

Herr Hitler asked how long he considered the time limit should be.

Sir Horace Wilson replied that communication of the Memorandum meant publication; and this peremptory time limit for the immediate military occupation of territory which was to be ceded by agreement would make the most profound impression on public opinion throughout the world.

Herr Hitler replied that if the dates were taken out there would be no end to the ensuing negotiations. Now that Czechoslovakia had mobilised, Germany would take appropriate military measures, and other States might well follow suit. It was quite impossible for such a state of affairs to last indefinitely.

The Prime Minister said that it was his definite opinion that the time limit, as set forth in the Memorandum, would produce a deplorable effect on public opinion in England and probably elsewhere. The Memorandum was an ultimatum and not a negotiation.

Herr Hitler said that it bore the word 'Memorandum' on the top.

The Prime Minister retorted that he was more impressed by the contents than by the title.

Herr Hitler said that they had now been negotiating for two days. Surely it was not unreasonable that at some point or other, a concrete proposal must be made which would have to be taken or rejected. He repeated that things could not be left as they were.

The Prime Minister said that it was to some extent a matter of form. The way in which the proposals were put would inevitably make people say that Herr Hitler was behaving like a conqueror. (Herr Hitler interjected: 'No, like an owner of his property.') It was the behaviour of a victor to a defeated foe. No time was given for the slightest discussion; there was no time even for the practical execution of the necessary measures. When Herr Hitler said that there was no time to lose, he would agree.

Herr Hitler then asked the Prime Minister if he had read the memorandum.

The Prime Minister replied that he had already seen a pencilled translation of the most important passages written for him by Sir Nevile Henderson; he did not want to read any more of the memorandum, and if he did it would not make him change his opinion.

Herr von Ribbentrop asked what exactly were the Prime Minister's objections to the document. General agreement had now been reached in principle to cede the territory. Evacuation, followed by occupation, must come some time or other. The only question was the question of time. Why did they object to the time?

At this point, after some discussion, it was decided that Herr Schmidt should translate the memorandum orally into English. He did so, and when he came to the words 'The following demands are made by the German Government,' the Prime Minister pointed out that it was precisely this sort of aggressive language he had in mind when he criticised the tone of the memorandum. They were ostensibly negotiating a peaceful settlement, and the German Government was putting forward demands.

Herr Hitler said that he had no objection to substituting the word 'proposal' for 'demand'. The memorandum was accordingly modified.

The Prime Minister pointed out at a further point in the translation of the memorandum that the proposal for a German-Czech boundary commission was a slight departure from Herr Hitler's original ideas, which provided for the choice between an international boundary commission or a German-Czech one.

Herr Hitler said that he thought it more practicable to have the work done by a German-Czech commission for the reason that once they had reached that stage he, Herr Hitler, would have no interest whatsoever in trying to incorporate Czechs into the Reich. On the contrary, he would do his best to have as few as possible.

The Prime Minister said that however that might be, public opinion would prefer and would have more confidence in an international commission than in a German-Czech commission; he need not specify why.

Herr Hitler said that if that were Mr. Chamberlain's view, he would readily add the words 'or international commission' after the words 'German-Czech'.

After listening to the provisions of the memorandum dealing with the measures to be taken to put into effect the results of the plebiscite, the Prime Minister examined the German map and asked how it was proposed that the wishes of the voters would be carried out. What, for example, would be the size of the units in which the existence of a bare majority would bring about a transfer from one side to another? After some discussion Herr Hitler said that this would be the task of the German-Czech or international boundary commission. Generally speaking, it was clear that islands could not be moved across the border, but any little blocks on the frontier line could and would be shifted in accordance with the votes to the other side of the border.

The Prime Minister, when the memorandum had been read, said that he would like to repeat that as an intermediary his duty was to transmit proposals and he would do this. He had said from the first that the memorandum would have a bad effect on public opinion. The Führer had asked him to read the document first and then to tell him why. After hearing the memorandum read he could say once more that the insertion of the dates would have a deplorable effect. The dates in themselves were wholly impracticable; it was now already the 24th September, and the Czechs were being required



between the evening of the 24th, when the memorandum would reach them, and the morning of the 26th, to accept it and to issue the necessary orders to enable the withdrawal of the troops to begin. But he did not wish to lay stress on the impracticability of the dates, and it would not really help him if the time-table were put forward by a day. The fact remained that laying down a peremptory and rigid time-table of this nature would have a bad effect on public opinion.

If Czechoslovakia accepted the memorandum, he, Mr. Chamberlain, agreed that no time should be lost in carrying it into effect. If they accepted, he would do his best to see that they carried it out in a reasonable time, and in this matter he would feel a certain responsibility.

Herr Hitler asked what exactly he regarded as a reasonable time?

The Prime Minister replied that he could not say now what would be a reasonable time, but he meant a reasonable time, and Herr Hitler could safely trust his sincerity in this respect.

Herr Hitler said that the Czech mobilisation was the second of its kind. The first had taken place in May when Germany had not moved a single man. The action of the Czech Government meant counter military measures. Quite apart from the constant incidents on the frontier, to which he had drawn urgent attention, it was manifestly impossible for the German Government to wait indefinitely with 90 or 100 Divisions under arms. Other considerations apart, the cost was prohibitive.

He would not be fulfilling his duty to his country if he did not take these military measures. The Czechs might at any moment change their Government and the new Government might reverse the decision of their predecessors in regard to the acceptance of self-determination of the Sudetens and cession of the territory to Germany. In that event His Majesty's Government would doubtless regard the action of the Czech Government as regrettable, and would condemn it. But the German Government would have to act. In the meantime he would omit the two sets of dates and substitute the 1st October.

The Prime Minister said that he could not, of course, either accept or reject the memorandum; he could only transmit. He appreciated the spirit in which his objections to the form had been made [*sic*, ? *met*], and he thought that from this point of view, but of course from that point alone, the effect on public opinion would be better.

The Prime Minister said that he would like to ask one more question, and he would put it to Herr Hitler for his own satisfaction. Big things were at stake and it would be wrong to forgo the slightest opportunity merely for the sake of a few minutes' talk.

Herr Hitler had said that the memorandum represented his last word, but he had made a number of alterations of form. The question he now wished to put to Herr Hitler related to the occupation of the territory by troops. Under the proposals of the memorandum the whole territory would be immediately

occupied by troops. Could the occupation by German troops be confined to that part of the territory only which had a considerable German preponderance, say, for example, 80 per cent.? Acceptance of this suggestion could not possibly make any difference in the end, but it might possibly be found helpful.

Herr Hitler replied that the suggestion had, in fact, been previously mooted, and he had discussed it that very morning with his military advisers. In their view such a partial occupation was technically impossible in view of the character of the frontier and the distribution of the population. In some parts the doubtful areas were in pockets, and not on the border at all. If they were not to be entered by troops, troop movements in the whole Sudeten area would be gravely hampered, if not rendered impossible. Many vital roads and railways required by the military authorities passed through some of these so-called doubtful areas, where the total number of Germans was less than 80 per cent.

Sir Horace Wilson pointed out that the road question would arise whichever of the two provisional boundaries was adopted.

Herr Hitler said there was a further important consideration in his mind. It was precisely in those areas in which the Czechs were the most numerous that it was most important to ensure public order. For this purpose it was necessary to have a strong visible authority, namely, the army. Germany would be responsible for the maintenance of order, and order there would be. If, after two months, as he confidently anticipated, order reigned in the so-called doubtful areas, there would be no risk in withdrawing the troops for four, six or eight days during the plebiscite.

Sir Horace Wilson said that he was not quite sure that Herr Hitler had understood the Prime Minister's question. He would, therefore, repeat it in unmistakable language. The area shown in the Führer's map should be the area to be ceded (subject to the method of boundary adjustment proposed in the memorandum), but the proposal for *early* occupation should be confined to an area based upon an 80 per cent. nationality basis—the remainder to be occupied as soon as the results of the voting are known.

Herr Hitler replied that he perfectly understood the matter. He would like to point out that there were large German language islands in Czech territory—he did not mention or propose a plebiscite for the large islands in the Carpathians, where the plebiscite would be held with Czech troops in occupation. He did not ask Czech troops not to be in occupation in these areas, for he realised that it would be, for practical reasons, impossible for them to withdraw. But he regarded the occupation of the so-called doubtful areas by German troops as something in the nature of compensation for the presence of Czech troops in the purely German language islands. In any event, he had been convinced by his military advisers that the suggestion of partial occupation was technically impossible, and he regretted, therefore, that it could not be entertained.

The Prime Minister said that there was one last question he wanted to put. If the memorandum were accepted, German troops would occupy areas in which there would be Czechs and possibly even some Germans who had worked against the 'Anschluss' with the Reich. What would happen to these people, and how would they be protected? He did not suggest that they would be necessarily beaten and mishandled, but the question would certainly be addressed to him in England, and he would be grateful if Herr Hitler would provide him with an answer.

Herr Hitler said he could only refer him to the experience of the Saar plebiscite. Critics of Germany had averred at the time that at least 100,000 persons would be the victims of revenge. But Herr Hitler was not aware of one single complaint against Germany on this score. The Germans bore no grudge against a Czech for wishing to be incorporated in his own country; that was the attitude they expected Germans to adopt. If any man in the Sudeten area, however, had murdered a German, he would be well advised to flee in time before the local population wreaked their vengeance on him. As regards Communists, it was high treason to indulge in Communist activities in Germany, and this would apply to the Sudeten territory; but he did not mind and had never minded what a Communist had been before, provided that he abandoned his Communist activities. In general, his object was to exchange populations on both sides as quickly as possible.

The Prime Minister then said he would submit the proposals to the Czech Government as soon as possible, and the conversation terminated.

#### No. 1074

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 24, 12.3 p.m.)*  
*No. 289 Telegraphic: by wireless [C 10574/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 24, 1938

My telegram No. 615 Saving.<sup>1</sup>

Members of the Socialist Radical group in the Chamber, to the number of about 50, were received by M. Daladier at 5 p.m. on September 23. M. Daladier gave them an account of the situation, and a communiqué was subsequently issued stating that the group had again expressed their full confidence in him to defend the interests of France.

M. P. Cot made the following statement to the press:

'France has gone to the extreme limit of concession. She cannot cede more. M. Daladier authorises me to say that if Germany carries out a *coup de force* against Czechoslovakia, France would fulfil her commitments.'

This statement is prominently reproduced in all newspapers.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram of September 23 reported that the Socialist Radical group had resolved to send a delegation 'to discuss the situation' with M. Daladier.

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 24, 1938, 3.0 p.m.)

*No. 290 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10589/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 24, 1938

My telegram No. 288<sup>1</sup> of today.

General Gamelin informed Military Attaché this morning after seeing President of the Council that latter's opinion was that the only way to save peace now was to demonstrate that France was prepared to fight.

The latest measures taken by France comprise:

(1) The mobilisation of those reservists necessary to complete Maginot line defences to full war establishment.

(2) The despatch to frontier area of a second batch of seven divisions which will reach their concentration areas this morning.

This makes a total of fourteen divisions despatched to the frontier in the last 48 hours.

These measures mean that apart from frontier defence which will be completely manned at war strength about twenty divisions (a total of some 800,000 men) will be mobilised in France. A portion of these have already been moved up to frontier areas. Owing to necessity for haste reservists have been called up by posters instead of the usual personal letter. General Gamelin had no details of help proposed to be given by Soviet but he pointed out that such help could in any case only take the form of assistance in the air which could not be very effective owing to lack of landing grounds in Czechoslovakia.

I have pressed M. Bonnet again this morning for statement you ask for but he begs for further time to consider the question.

M. Flandin called on me today spontaneously to say that all peasant class were against war and although in case of necessity they would march, their hearts would not be in it. This is confirmed to me by several other sources. (Moreover see my telegram No. 448 Saving<sup>2</sup> of July 3 in which M. Caillaux used similar language in regard to war in Spain.) In the event of initial reverses and heavy air bombardments they would agitate for early peace. Communist leaders who are the most active in egging on war are already telling their men that if there were these heavy air bombardments they would rise up, declare that France had been betrayed by her Government and set up a Communist régime.

My own impression is that the Government can decree mobilisation but not war without a vote in the Chamber and Senate. It would require three hundred votes in the Chamber and 150 in the Senate to secure a majority

<sup>1</sup> No. 1065.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. In this telegram Sir E. Phipps reported a conversation he had had with M. Caillaux, President of the Finance Commission of the Senate, in which the latter said that the peasants 'hardly know and certainly do not care about the war in Spain'.

and deputies who represent agricultural constituencies would be most reluctant to vote in favour of war. If therefore a vote were taken today, before the event, the issue would be doubtful. Most observers consider however that if the Germans invaded Czechoslovakia and Czechoslavs [*sic*] resisted with heavy casualties it would be difficult to keep public opinion within bounds for longer than ten days.

It is impossible however to foretell precise reactions of public opinion beforehand as public opinion would depend on circumstances of German aggression and amount of bloodshed thereby.

#### No. 1076

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 24, 5.45 p.m.)*  
*No. 292 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10602/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 24, 1938

My telegram No. 290.<sup>1</sup>

I wish to submit to His Majesty's Government my purely personal impressions, which are the following:—

Unless German aggression were so brutal, bloody and prolonged (through gallantry of Czechoslovak resistance) as to infuriate French public opinion to the extent of making it lose its reason, war now would be most unpopular in France.

I think therefore that His Majesty's Government should realise extreme danger of even appearing to encourage small, but noisy and corrupt, war group here.

All that is best in France is against war, *almost* at any price (hence the really deep and pathetic gratitude shown to our Prime Minister). Unless we are sure of considerable initial successes we shall find all that is best in France, as well as all that is worst, turn against us and accuse us of egging French on to fight what must have seemed from the outset a losing battle.

To embark upon what will presumably be the biggest conflict in history with our ally, who will fight, if fight she must, without eyes (Air Force) and without real heart must surely give us furiously to think.

It may be asked why I have not reported sooner in the above sense. The answer is that up to the last hour the French had hypnotised themselves into believing that peace depended upon Great Britain, and not upon Herr Hitler. They were convinced, that is to say, that if Great Britain spoke with sufficient firmness Herr Hitler would collapse. Only now do they realise that Herr Hitler may well be meaning to take on both our countries.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1075.

No. 1077

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 25, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 724 Telegraphic [C 10620/4786/18]*

PRAGUE, *September 24, 1938, 8.30 p.m.*

My telegram No. 715<sup>1</sup> and Paris telegram No. 3<sup>2</sup> to Godesberg.

In making communication to Czechoslovak Government as instructed I drew attention on two occasions to possible consequences of unnecessary publicity.

Their subsequent decision to order mobilisation by broadcasting was in Military Attaché's view the most effective method of carrying out general mobilisation with all it involves with speed which is clearly essential.

Alternative would have been to have used posters which would have been equally public but less speedy. An immediate partial mobilisation could no doubt have been effected by some less public stand [*sic*, ? method] but this would have inevitably been a slow process and ineffective to meet danger that now threatens. Neither French Government nor His Majesty's Government would hence think of blaming Czechoslovak Government on this score in view of doubtful . . .<sup>3</sup> delay of mobilisation.

Repeated to Paris.

Repeated to Berlin by Foreign Office.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1062.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1064.

<sup>3</sup> The text is here uncertain.

No. 1078

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*  
*No. 325 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10600/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 24, 1938, 8.40 p.m.*

Prime Minister would be very glad to make report personally to French Ministers on Godesberg conversations. If they could manage it and if it was not asking too much could they come over tomorrow Sunday for discussion in the afternoon.

No. 1079

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 355 Telegraphic [C 10601/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 24, 1938, 9.0 p.m.*

Prime Minister hopes that any reply of Czechoslovak Government to German memorandum may be transmitted through him. If Czechoslovak Government was able and desired to send special representative to London to discuss matters we should be very happy to receive him preferably on Monday.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> September 26.

No. 1080

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 24, 10.45 p.m.)*  
*No. 725 Telegraphic [C 10610/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 24, 1938, 9.0 p.m.

7.30 p.m.

Prime Minister's telegram to Prague No. 9.<sup>1</sup>

I communicated the English translation of memorandum to Minister for Foreign Affairs at 6 p.m. today 24 September which was earliest time when it was ready. In making communication I adhered closely to language used in the telegram.

2. I promised Dr. Krofta also to deliver German text and map as soon as possible. I have since learned that Colonel MacFarlane is bringing them by car from Berlin. As he did not leave until 3 p.m. it seems doubtful whether they can be delivered tonight.<sup>2</sup>

Repeated to Berlin and by the Foreign Office to Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1070.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Newton telegraphed at 12.24 a.m. on September 25 that Colonel Mason-MacFarlane had arrived at 11.15 p.m. and that the map and German text had been handed to an official of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs at 11.40 p.m.

No. 1081

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 24, 11.5 p.m.)*  
*No. 293 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10601/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 24, 1938

Your telegram No. 325.<sup>1</sup>

M. Daladier and M. Georges Bonnet will leave for London by air early tomorrow (Sunday) afternoon and hope to be ready for discussion at 5 p.m.

Exact times of departure and arrival will be communicated later.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1078.

No. 1082

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 25, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 522 Telegraphic [C 10599/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 25, 1938, 12.15 a.m.

I spoke to State Secretary at length this morning<sup>1</sup> as well as to Herr von Ribbentrop at aerodrome after departure of Prime Minister.

State Secretary was insistent that the only course was for Czechoslovak Government to send someone with wide powers immediately to approach German Government direct on the subject of occupation of Sudeten areas.

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was drafted on September 24.

I am very strongly of opinion that this is in fact the only course if war between the two countries is to be prevented and I would suggest strongest recommendation possible be addressed to Czechoslovak Government by French Government and ours in this sense.

I understand from Herr von Ribbentrop that he is accompanying Herr Hitler today to Munich which will thus be in a manner of speaking German headquarters and it is there that Czech envoy, if he is sent, should go.

I urged very strongly on both Herr von Ribbentrop and State Secretary that if the envoy did present himself everything possible on German side should be done to make things easier for the Czechs. Whole difficulty lies in fact *words* mean nothing any more to the German Government and the Czech intention to give effect to the decision to accept principle of self-determination can only be proved to them by *acts*.

Any encouragement given to the Czechs to hesitate or prevaricate will be disastrous and only immediate surrender of territories which they have agreed ultimately to surrender can save them from complete tragedy.

Repeated to Prague and Paris.

#### No. 1083

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 25, 1.15 p.m.)*

*No. 294 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10624/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 25, 1938

President of Finance Commission of Senate called on me this morning.

He definitely assured me of following:

A large majority of French are against war. If Parliament were summoned a large majority of Senate would vote against it (although its (? President)<sup>1</sup> might vote for it): a small majority of the Chamber might be for it. A number of legislative [*sic*] are paid by Soviets.

M. Caillaux feels strongly that further pressure should be put on Prague to give way; but he fears . . .<sup>1</sup> Soviet influence over M. Benes. He says that whatever the heart might counsel the brain must work up to the last moment for peace.

War with Germany means war with Poland, Hungary and Japan. In the air our towns will be wiped out, our women and children will be slaughtered. The French Army will fight magnificently. It will be incidentally safer in its Maginot line than civilians. Heavy air bombardments of factories round Paris may well cause another Commune.

If he were going to war today as the French President of the Council he would say to the Prime Minister . . .<sup>1</sup> If you wish to resist Herr Hitler's latest demands by power, you must have conscription in Great Britain at once, and you must understand that possible losses of a war will be evenly shared at the end by Great Britain and France, that is to say if colonies have to be surrendered, both countries will contribute equally.

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.



M. Caillaux remarks that a different attitude may obtain here if Herr Hitler actually goes to war with the Czechs and pushes into purely Czech territory although even then French public opinion as a whole will be opposed to war, especially as presumably . . .<sup>2</sup> report would be made public.

Finally M. Caillaux feels that Herr Hitler has in a sense given way (although that must never be trumpeted abroad like after May 21) for, by allowing Czechoslovakia's mobilisation to take place, he has consented to sacrifice many more German lives than he would have done by walking into Sudeten areas the night before last.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

#### No. 1084

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 25)<sup>1</sup>*

*No. 295 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10616/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 25, 1938

My telegram No. 293.<sup>2</sup>

A ministerial council has been summoned for 2.30 p.m. this afternoon.

General Gamelin has been in close consultation with M. Daladier for a long time this morning.

<sup>1</sup> The hour of receipt of this telegram is not recorded.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1081.

#### No. 1085

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 25, 1.30 p.m.)*

*No. 727 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10731/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 25, 1938

Your telegram No. 355.<sup>1</sup>

Czechoslovak Government readily agree to first sentence. They are now discussing ways and means and promise an answer during the day.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1079.

#### No. 1086

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 25, 2.0 p.m.)*

*No. 296 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10619/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 25, 1938

Following communiqué has been issued to Havas by German Embassy here, but the French Government have not yet decided whether it shall be published. Begins:

Un communiqué de l'Ambassade d'Allemagne sur la situation.

Paris, 25 septembre

L'Ambassade d'Allemagne est autorisée à déclarer que lors des entretiens de Godesberg, le Chancelier du Reich et le Premier Ministre de Sa Majesté britannique ont pu constater leur parfait accord sur l'impérieuse nécessité de maintenir la paix européenne. Ils ont été également d'accord sur la nécessité non moins urgente du retour des territoires des Sudètes à l'Allemagne. Ce n'est qu'au sujet de certains détails de la procédure par laquelle le transfert des territoires en question devra être effectué, que certaines différences de vues se sont fait jour.

Étant donné que la situation sur place est devenue insupportable pour la minorité allemande sans défense, et constitue par là un extrême danger pour la paix européenne, le Chancelier du Reich a fait savoir au Premier Ministre britannique que l'Allemagne se voit dans l'impossibilité de renoncer à l'évacuation rapide des territoires sudètes à large majorité allemande par la police et par les troupes tchèques et à l'occupation de ces territoires par des détachements allemands qui, seuls, seraient capables de garantir l'ordre et la tranquillité dans ces régions.

En vue du fait que le Premier Ministre britannique s'est chargé de transmettre les propositions allemandes à Prague, c'est à l'heure actuelle du Gouvernement de Prague que dépend le maintien de la paix en Europe.

En tout cas, l'opinion publique allemande observe avec un entier sang-froid et dans un calme exemplaire les développements de l'affaire tchécoslovaque. Ends.

**No. 1087**

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received September 25, 2.30 p.m.)*

*No. 525 Telegraphic: by wireless [C 10628/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 25, 1938

I submit following is estimate of situation:

Anglo-French and individual British intervention with a view to solving Sudeten problem in an orderly and deliberate fashion has failed. It will have equally failed to solve without war if Czechoslovak Government reject German plan.

If Czechoslovak Government reject German plan or give temporising reply it must be taken for granted German troops will proceed to occupy Sudeten areas not later than October 1. If Czechs reply to this beforehand with refusal German Government will not regard themselves as bound to wait until October 1. It can be taken for granted that no threat in spite of war will deter Herr Hitler: he has made up his mind to take risk and that is final so far as he is concerned. Any hope or belief to the contrary is absolutely chimerical. Had it not been for Prime Minister's two journeys action would already have been taken by him and Czechs would not have been allowed to mobilise in peace.

It can equally be taken for granted that Herr Hitler will take no action against France and still less against England unless attacked by them. His entire objective is if there is war to localise it.

It may be taken for granted that Hungary, Poland and Italy will support Germany in the event of a conflict, their activity or merely benevolent co-operation depending on developments.

It can be taken for granted that Czechoslovak Government if they receive any encouragement will fight (? rather than)<sup>1</sup> lose this last chance to retain . . .<sup>1</sup> territory . . .<sup>1</sup> they have had to agree to surrender.

It can be taken for granted that only hope of preventing or at least localising war is for His Majesty's Government . . .<sup>1</sup> to make it absolutely clear at Prague that they must accept German plan or forfeit claim to further support from Western Powers.

If this advice is not given German nation will regard war as made not on merits of Sudeten case but as merely preventive. It will rally in the circumstances to a man round Herr Hitler.

Please repeat to Prague.

Repeated to Paris.

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.

#### No. 1088

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 25, 6.45 p.m.)*  
*No. 735 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10646/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 25, 1938

Your telegram No. 344.<sup>1</sup>

In English translation as telegraphed of first of Herr Hitler's proposals (withdrawal of Czech armed forces) crucial date is given as October 13.<sup>2</sup> German text brought to me by Colonel Mason-Macfarlane says October 1.

Which is correct?<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No. 1068.

<sup>2</sup> In this telegram as received at the Foreign Office, the date is October 1.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Newton was informed by telephone at 9.45 p.m. that October 1 was the correct date.

#### No. 1089

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 25, 1938, 7.20 p.m.)*  
*No. 299 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10644/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 25, 1938

I understand on excellent authority that there is no doubt that MM. Daladier and Bonnet have gone to London with their position marked out and that they have a limited mandate beyond which they must consult their colleagues.

No. 1090

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*  
*No. 414 Telegraphic: [? by telephone] [C 10851/4786/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 25, 1938, 7.40 p.m.*

1. Please at once assure Herr Hitler on behalf of Prime Minister and myself that statement alleged to have been broadcast by Czechoslovak Government, to the effect that Czech mobilisation had been ordered with knowledge, help and approval of British and French Governments is inaccurate. (Incidentally, I understand correct version is 'with knowledge, *advice* and approval'.)

2. At an earlier stage of the negotiations Czechoslovak Government asked His Majesty's Government, in view of negotiations then proceeding, how they would view Czech mobilisation.

In reply His Majesty's Government said that, while fully recognising that decision on this question was one for Czechoslovak Government, they would urge that Government to abstain from mobilisation measures pending further negotiations.

3. Later, in response to Czechoslovak appeal, and in view of development of military situation across their frontier, His Majesty's Government informed Czechoslovak Government that they would not continue to take responsibility of advising them not to mobilise. It was however pointed out to Czechoslovak Government that they must bear in mind that announcement of their mobilisation might very well precipitate action by others.

4. We consider foregoing shows inaccuracy of allegation that mobilisation was undertaken with advice and approval of His Majesty's Government. As regards knowledge of the step, we received information of it only after it had been decided.

5. As regards German request for public statement, you may say British Press will be given foregoing information tomorrow morning.

No. 1091

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 25, 7.55 p.m.)*  
*No. 739 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10647/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, *September 25, 1938*

My telegram No. 727.<sup>1</sup>

Ministry of Foreign Affairs have informed me that reply to [*sic*] Czechoslovak Government will not be ready before tomorrow evening, 26 September, when they wish to hand it to me.

They also wish to send a copy as rapidly as possible to Czechoslovak Minister in London and on account of its great length it would be preferable to send it by aeroplane. They have not yet decided whether it would be

<sup>1</sup> No. 1085.

taken by a delegate from here who would himself discuss matters with Prime Minister or merely by a messenger in which case M. Masaryk and Czechoslovak Minister in Paris would constitute the delegation.

In any case they ask whether in view of the fact that a Czech aeroplane cannot in present conditions pass safely over Germany His Majesty's Government would be willing to send out a special machine for the purpose.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> In a later telegram (No. 741) telephoned on September 26, at 9.30 a.m., Mr. Newton reported that the communication from the Czechoslovak Minister (see below, No. 1092) constituted the final reply and there was nothing more to add.

## No. 1092

*Note from the Czechoslovak Minister to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 25)<sup>1</sup>*  
*[C 10670/1941/18]*

*September 25, 1938*

Sir,

My Government has instructed me just now, in view of the fact that the French statesmen are not [? now] arriving in London to-day, to bring to His Majesty's Government's notice the following message without any delay.

The Czechoslovak people have shown a unique discipline and self-restraint in the last few weeks regardless of the unbelievably coarse and vulgar campaign of the controlled German press and radio against Czechoslovakia and its leaders, especially Mr. Benes.

His Majesty's and the French Governments are very well aware that we agreed under the most severe pressure to the so-called Anglo-French plan for ceding parts of Czechoslovakia. We accepted this plan under extreme duress. We had not even time to make any representations about its many unworkable features. Nevertheless we accepted it because we understood that it was the end of the demands to be made upon us and because it followed from the Anglo-French pressure that these two Powers would accept responsibility for our reduced frontiers and would guarantee us their support in the event of our being feloniously attacked.

The vulgar German campaign continued.

While Mr. Chamberlain was at Godesberg the following message was received by my Government from His Majesty's and the French representatives at Prague:

'We have agreed with the French Government that the Czechoslovak Government be informed that the French and British Governments cannot continue to take the responsibility of advising them not to mobilize.'

My new Government, headed by General Syrový, declared that they

<sup>1</sup> This note was received during the afternoon of September 25.

accept full responsibility for their predecessors' decision to accept the stern terms of the so-called Anglo-French plan.

Yesterday, after the return of Mr. Chamberlain from Godesberg, a new proposition was handed by His Majesty's Minister in Prague to my Government with the additional information that His Majesty's Government is acting solely as an intermediary and is neither advising nor pressing my Government in any way. Mr. Krofta, in receiving the plan from the hands of His Majesty's Minister in Prague, assured him that the Czechoslovak Government will study it in the same spirit in which they have co-operated with Great Britain and France hitherto.

My Government has now studied the document and the map. It is a *de facto* ultimatum of the sort usually presented to a vanquished nation and not a proposition to a sovereign state which has shown the greatest possible readiness to make sacrifices for the appeasement of Europe. Not the smallest trace of such readiness for sacrifices has as yet been manifested by Mr. Hitler's Government. My Government is amazed at the contents of the memorandum. The proposals go far beyond what we agreed to in the so-called Anglo-French plan. They deprive us of every safeguard for our national existence. We are to yield up large proportions of our carefully prepared defences and admit the German armies deep into our country before we have been able to organize it on the new basis or make any preparations for its defence. Our national and economic independence would automatically disappear with the acceptance of Herr Hitler's plan. The whole process of moving the population is to be reduced to panic flight on the part of those who will not accept the German Nazi regime. They have to leave their homes without even the right to take their personal belongings or even, in the case of peasants, their cow.

My Government wish me to declare in all solemnity that Herr Hitler's demands in their present form are absolutely and unconditionally unacceptable to my Government. Against these new and cruel demands my Government feel bound to make their utmost resistance and we shall do so, God helping. The nation of St. Wenceslas, John Hus and Thomas Masaryk will not be a nation of slaves.

We rely upon the two great Western democracies, whose wishes we have followed much against our own judgment, to stand by us in our hour of trial.

I have, &c.,

JAN MASARYK

*Record<sup>1</sup> of an Anglo-French Conversation held at No. 10 Downing Street  
on September 25, 1938, 9.25 p.m.*

[C 11264/1941/18]

Present:

*United Kingdom—*

Mr. Neville Chamberlain.  
Viscount Halifax.  
Sir John Simon.  
Sir Samuel Hoare.  
Sir R. Vansittart.  
Sir Horace Wilson.  
The Hon. Sir A. Cadogan.  
Mr. E. E. Bridges (Secretary to the Cabinet).  
Mr. William Strang (Foreign Office).  
Mr. F. K. Roberts (Foreign Office).

*France—*

M. Edouard Daladier.  
M. Georges Bonnet.  
M. Charles Corbin.  
M. Alexis Léger.  
M. Charles Rochat (Head of the European Department, Ministry for  
Foreign Affairs).  
M. Jules Henry (Ministry for Foreign Affairs).  
M. Roland de Margerie (French Embassy).

Mr. Chamberlain thought that M. Daladier and M. Bonnet would wish him to open the conversations by giving an account of his conversations with Herr Hitler at Godesberg. To save time he had prepared a note which he suggested should be translated. He emphasised that this note was not to be a document in the record, but was only being read to save time. This account of the conversations read as follows:—

At the Prime Minister's first interview with Hitler (Thursday evening, the 22 September), Hitler started by saying that he did not know what the proposals were which had been put to the Czechoslovak Government, and the Prime Minister explained to him the nature of these proposals.

Hitler expressed appreciation of the efforts made to reach a settlement, and asked whether these proposals had in fact been submitted to the Czechs. When he was informed that this had been done, he said he was sorry, for the proposals were not acceptable.

<sup>1</sup> *Note in the original:* These notes were made for information only, and do not constitute an agreed official record.

*Editor's note:* A French record of the conversation was subsequently received. The date of reception in the Foreign Office is uncertain. The only important difference between these two records is noted on p. 532.

Hitler's reason was that the Franco-British plan for transferring the territory was too slow, and would give occasion for evasion and delay on the part of the Czechs. He contended that feeling was being roused to exasperation by a series of incidents and the situation, in his view, was too dangerous for leisurely treatment. The only way was to make a transfer which could be carried out speedily and effectively.

Hitler then explained his alternative plan and produced his map showing the area which should be handed over to Germany at once, and described some of the other provisions now contained in the memorandum.

The Prime Minister challenged Hitler's proposal on the ground that public opinion would not regard immediate occupation by German troops of the area to be transferred as acceptable in present circumstances and would view such occupation as analogous to the seizure of conquered territory. The arrangement which the French and we had contemplated, and indeed had recommended for acceptance to the Czechs, was the peaceful transfer of the Sudeten area under agreed arrangements, and the immediate entry of German troops was not the most appropriate method of carrying this out.

Hitler persisted that this was, for the reasons he had given, the necessary method and was the best way of securing that law and order would be preserved. In order to avoid any suggestion that the plebiscite which he suggested should be taken in the areas on the fringe would be influenced by improper pressure, Germany's military forces should be withdrawn from these areas before the plebiscite took place.

Hitler became very discursive and there were many interruptions, and ultimately the conversation on Thursday night ended by Hitler, at the Prime Minister's request and in his presence, giving orders to General Keitel that disturbances likely to lead to provocation should be discouraged, while the Prime Minister issued his public appeal to the Czechs urging patience and avoidance of incidents while negotiations were proceeding.

On Friday morning, instead of resuming conversations, the Prime Minister despatched a letter to Hitler repeating the difficulties he saw in the proposal that areas should be immediately occupied by German troops. Hitler was disappointed and surprised at receiving a letter instead of having the opportunity of continuing his discursive observations, but he decided to send a written reply, and the appointment to resume conversations on Friday morning was cancelled. Hitler's reply had been promised before lunch, but in fact did not reach the Prime Minister until 4 p.m.

The substance of the letter, apart from repeating at length complaints of past maltreatment of Sudeten Germans and disbelief in Czech promises, was to maintain the attitude formerly taken up by Hitler. It was not the recognition of the principle that there must be a transfer of this territory which interested Hitler, but solely the realisation of this principle in the shortest time.

In Thursday evening's conversation, in urging acceptance of his proposal, Hitler described it as 'a peaceful solution', and intimated that, failing acceptance of his proposals, he would be obliged to seek 'a military solution', and



that in that event he would draw not 'a nationality frontier,' but 'a military and strategic frontier'. There can be no doubt that this alternative is intended to mean drawing a line at the narrowest point involving the taking of Prague and the absorption of the whole of Bohemia. In his letter on Thursday [*sic*, ?Friday] he again refers to the nationality frontier as what is offered 'in the event of a peaceful solution'.

On receiving and considering Hitler's letter on Friday afternoon, the Prime Minister came to the conclusion that, in his capacity as intermediary, it was his duty to put Hitler's proposals before the Czech Government. Accordingly, the Prime Minister asked for a memorandum together with a map, which was subsequently provided. The Prime Minister's object was to get details in writing which could be forwarded to Prague and also to obtain an extension of the assurance he had obtained at Berchtesgaden that Hitler would not attack Czechoslovakia while negotiations were continuing.

There was one subsequent interview late the same night. The memorandum at this stage was handed to the Prime Minister in German, and a first examination at once revealed its harsh terms. Some of these were modified by Hitler, though of course the Prime Minister took care not to express any satisfaction with the document as amended. On the contrary, he emphasised the folly of the risks Hitler was running in pressing for such terms and of the terrible consequences to all if they led to war. He reproached Hitler for having failed to make proper concessions, notwithstanding his own efforts, and Hitler replied that the strategic frontier that would be drawn if the Germans conquered the country would be very different from the nationality frontier which was now proposed.

The Prime Minister left Hitler in no doubt as to the judgment which would be pronounced by public opinion on the terms of his memorandum. He said that he would send the memorandum to the Czechoslovak Government and would report to the French as soon as possible.

M. Daladier thanked the Prime Minister and expressed his sentiments of admiration for the clear and definite attitude he had taken up when confronted by the exaggerated demands put forward by Herr Hitler. The French Ministers had had no time to examine in detail Herr Hitler's memorandum of the 23 September, since it had only been received at 11.30 a.m. this morning. He regretted that they had received it so late. Nevertheless, the French Council of Ministers had considered it this afternoon. They had been unanimous in rejecting any idea of suppressing the international commission which had been decided upon in principle by the French and British Ministers. Since what was under consideration was the cession of territory to which the Czechoslovak Government had agreed as a heavy sacrifice and to which the French Government, her ally and friend, had also agreed, the French Government could not recognise Herr Hitler's right to take possession of this territory by force. If he did so, it was evident that the Czechoslovak army would resist by force. We should then be confronted by the European conflict which we had tried to avoid last Sunday. This was the first point he wished to make

clear. The second point was that the French Council of Ministers had been unanimous in refusing to agree to the plebiscite demanded by Herr Hitler in the areas shaded green in his map—areas in which Herr Hitler himself recognised that the majority of the population was purely Czech. In view of this demand it was clearly no longer a question of reaching a fair arrangement after heavy sacrifices, but, as he had often said, we were confronted with a plan of Herr Hitler and his régime, not so much to take over  $3\frac{1}{2}$  million Germans as to destroy Czechoslovakia by force, enslaving her, and afterwards realising the domination of Europe, which was his object. On this point the French Council of Ministers had been unanimous and M. Daladier could do no more than interpret their decision.

Mr. Chamberlain could not understand how this document had only been delivered to the French Government this morning. It had been sent off from Godesberg early on Saturday morning (the 24 September) in a telegram to Sir E. Phipps and should have reached the French Government that day.<sup>2</sup>

M. Daladier reaffirmed that it had only reached the French Government that morning about 10.30 a.m.

Mr. Chamberlain thought he should make certain observations to clear up any doubts about Herr Hitler's proposals. As regards the first point raised by M. Daladier, the proposal made in the German memorandum was not to take these areas by force, but only to take over areas handed over by agreement. The German troops would only be admitted for the purpose of preserving law and order which the German Government maintained could not be done effectively in any other way. In view of M. Daladier's remark that he had had very little time in which to examine the details of the plan, Mr. Chamberlain wished to explain that the area marked red was the area which was to be handed over according to Herr Hitler's proposals. This area would not, however, necessarily constitute the final and definitive frontier. That would be determined later in the light of the plebiscite to be held under international control which was also contemplated in the memorandum. As regards the areas shaded green, according to the statement which Herr Hitler had made, there was no question of adding to the territory within the red line those areas shaded green in which a plebiscite showed that there existed a majority of persons not wishing to join the Reich. When Mr. Chamberlain had remarked to Herr Hitler that the areas within the red zone appeared to include certain areas in which a majority would subsequently be found who did not wish to join the Reich, Herr Hitler replied that he did not think so, but, if this proved to be the case, he would not wish to bring such areas into the Reich. Herr Hitler had even indicated that in one large area shaded green he did not expect the plebiscite would give a German majority. He did not, therefore, want to take over that area, but only to show that the proportion of the German population was larger than had been supposed, in order that he might obtain more considerate treatment for

<sup>2</sup> For Sir E. Phipps's statement that the text of the memorandum was given to one of M. Bonnet's secretaries about 10.20 p.m. on September 24, see No. 1152.

the German minority afterwards. Mr. Chamberlain thought it desirable to give this explanation, as M. Daladier had referred to the little time which he had had for studying the memorandum, and it was therefore desirable to avoid any misunderstanding.

M. Daladier said that the memorandum might have been considered too rapidly, but, if he had understood it correctly, there were two things in the German memorandum. In the first place Herr Hitler considered all the territory in the area marked red to be his already without a plebiscite in view of the fact that these were areas with over 50 per cent. Sudeten population which had been shown to be such in the recent communal elections. These, in Herr Hitler's view, already belonged to him. This seemed clear from the French translation of the memorandum, which he had not been able to study in the original German. He understood, therefore, that the area marked red was that which we had already agreed should be ceded to Germany. Therefore, in this area there was no need for a plebiscite. We had already agreed to this in order to avoid conflicts between the Germans and the Czechs which might lead to a real war. It had, however, also been agreed that we should set up an international commission which would assure evacuation of these areas by the Czechoslovak troops and progressive entry by the German troops. Herr Hitler objected to the proposal of an international commission. He wanted to enter immediately with his army and for the Czechoslovak troops to retire immediately without any consideration by an international commission. There were, however, very difficult questions for such a body to decide. There were many democrats in this area. Were they to be left to the axe and the executioners of Herr Hitler? It was essential to safeguard our honour by ensuring the departure of these democrats and also ensuring that those Czechs who wished to do so should also withdraw. M. Daladier asked to be corrected if his understanding was wrong. He thought that none amongst them had foreseen this situation. He had understood that it was proposed to hold a plebiscite in certain areas where it was uncertain whether there was a German or a Czech majority. But it transpired that the green areas in which it was proposed by Herr Hitler that plebiscites should be held coincided as if by chance with most important districts in Moravia. If these areas were occupied by the German troops, Czechoslovakia would be at Germany's mercy. The remaining Czech territory would be cut off from Slovakia and nothing could be done by the Czechs without the approval of the Germans controlling the exit and entry through this bottleneck. There had been no question of this in our previous negotiations and no such claim had been advanced from the German side. M. Daladier therefore repeated that his understanding, subject to correction, was that Herr Hitler should immediately take over the red areas; there would be no international commission, and if the inhabitants of those areas whose sympathies were democratic or republican wished to leave them for Czechoslovakia, Herr Hitler's reply would be that they were in his territory; then, as regards the plebiscite areas of Moravia, Herr Hitler's demand amounted to the dismemberment of

Czechoslovakia and German domination of Europe. This was the conclusion reached by the French Council of Ministers. They had reached it independently of M. Daladier, who had spoken last in order to avoid influencing his colleagues, but all were of the same opinion.

Mr. Chamberlain thought there must be some misunderstanding of the actual German proposals, and it was very important that no such misunderstanding should exist. According to these proposals, it was not the case that the areas marked red were to be considered already as permanently and definitely German. The areas finally to be ceded and the definite frontier line would only be decided after the plebiscite had been taken. Herr Hitler had said he would agree to a plebiscite being taken under the control of an international commission and that he would withdraw his troops from any areas which were found to be racially mixed. It was not the case that the original Anglo-French proposals had contemplated supervision of the Czechoslovak evacuation of these areas by an international commission. These proposals had laid down that the areas to be transferred should include all those in which the Sudeten population formed over 50 per cent. of the inhabitants. The provisions for the transfer of populations had related to areas where the population was mixed. This, in fact, was the same proposal as that put forward by Herr Hitler. The main difference between our proposal and his proposal was that we had not contemplated that the areas marked in red would forthwith be occupied by German troops. We had thought that this would not take place until the frontier had been finally delimited. Herr Hitler maintained that if we delayed matters in this way there would inevitably be disorders and conflicts.

M. Daladier had also said that if anyone wished to leave these territories they would be told that they were already German. Here also there seemed to be some misunderstanding. The question of Czechs or German democrats wishing to leave the ceded areas and of Germans wishing to leave the future Czechoslovak territory was to be settled afterwards. Herr Hitler's memorandum therefore merely provided for the arrangements which it was suggested should be made in the first instance to preserve law and order. Arrangements for the subsequent exchange of populations would be made later.

There also seemed to be some misunderstanding as regards the areas shaded green. It was not proposed that these should be occupied by German troops. The proposed German military occupation was confined to the areas shaded red. Herr Hitler had indicated that even if the eventual frontier had to be drawn inside the area at present shaded red he would abide by such a result if it were decided upon by the international commission, and would withdraw his troops to within the definitive frontier. Mr. Chamberlain did not, however, wish to spend too much time in this connexion. He had wished to remove certain misunderstandings although the French Government might still have exactly the same feelings after these misunderstandings had been removed. He wished to proceed to the next question which was, even accepting the objections raised by M. Daladier, what did he propose to do next?

M. Daladier proposed that our next step should be to say to Herr Hitler that he should return to the Anglo-French proposals agreed upon last Sunday (the 18 September).

Mr. Chamberlain asked what should be done if Herr Hitler refused.

M. Daladier said that in that case each of us would have to do his duty.

Mr. Chamberlain thought we should have to go a little further than that. He thought it probable in the light of the attitude Herr Hitler had maintained when Mr. Chamberlain had seen him at Godesberg that he would refuse and maintain the position he had now adopted. If, therefore, we were to put forward M. Daladier's proposal we must consider now what should be done in the hypothesis of a refusal from Herr Hitler.

M. Daladier said he had no further proposal to make.

Mr. Chamberlain thought we could not fence about this question. We had to get down to the stern realities of the situation. Assuming that the Czech Government, with whom it rested to make the first reply, said they would not accept Herr Hitler's proposal, then in accordance with the arrangements reached their reply would have to be transmitted to the German Government by the British Government. We could accompany this reply with counter-proposals, for example, referring the matter to a conference as M. Daladier had suggested.

M. Daladier interjected that he had not made any proposal for a conference.

Sir John Simon said he had understood M. Daladier's suggestion was to return to the Anglo-French proposals of the 18 September. He presumed that the object of this suggestion was to enable agreement to be reached.

Mr. Chamberlain continued by stating that Herr Hitler had said very definitely that his memorandum represented his last word and we might take it or leave it. If we refused, he would at once take military measures. He would not then confine himself to a frontier such as that marked on the map, but in deciding his future frontiers, he would be guided purely by strategic and military considerations. We must, therefore, consider the probability that, on receipt of a reply from His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom on the lines now under consideration, Herr Hitler, instead of temporising any further, would interpret it as a rejection of his proposals and say he would march into Czechoslovakia. Mr. Chamberlain wished to know what the French attitude would be in such an event.

M. Daladier replied that Herr Hitler would then have brought about a situation in which aggression would have been provoked by him.

Mr. Chamberlain asked what then.

M. Daladier thought each of us would do what was incumbent upon him.

Mr. Chamberlain asked whether we were to understand from that that France would declare war on Germany.

M. Daladier said that the matter was very clear. The French Government had always said, and he had himself repeated three days ago, that, in the event of unprovoked aggression against Czechoslovakia, France would fulfil her obligations. It was because the news from Germany had been bad that he had asked 1,000,000 Frenchmen to go to the frontier. They had gone calmly and with dignity, conscious of the justice of their cause.

Mr. Chamberlain said that no doubt M. Daladier had considered what the next step should be after that. It would be of great assistance to His Majesty's Government to hear from M. Daladier whether the French General Staff had got some plan, and, if so, what that plan was. He assumed that it was impossible to give direct assistance to the Czechoslovak people if aggression took place. He presumed, therefore, that it must be the intention of the French Government to carry on hostilities against Germany in some other area.

M. Daladier said he would certainly reply to this question, which had been put to him five or six months ago, and to which he had already replied then. It was not possible for France to send help directly to Czechoslovakia by land, but France could materially assist Czechoslovakia by drawing the greater part of the German army against France.

Mr. Chamberlain hoped M. Daladier would not think he was bringing pressure to bear unduly upon M. Daladier in these questions. One could not, however, go into so great a conflict with one's eyes and ears closed. It was essential to know the conditions before taking any decision. He would, therefore, like further information and would ask Sir John Simon to put certain points to M. Daladier which had troubled the British Ministers a great deal for some time past.

Sir John Simon thought that the first question upon which the British Ministers greatly desired to be informed was whether M. Daladier, so far as French land forces were concerned, contemplated the invasion of Germany.

M. Daladier said he could ask General Gamelin to give to another conference a full technical explanation of the plans which he had already drawn up.

Sir John Simon said he did not wish to appear to be playing the strategist for he was only an ordinary public man. This was, however, a very important general consideration to which the French Government must have given close attention. When the French troops had been called up to do their duty, was that duty just to man the Maginot Line and remain there without any declaration of war, or was it the intention of the French Government to declare war and take active measures with their land forces?

M. Daladier said that would depend on many things.

Sir John Simon said he was sure that M. Daladier would appreciate that he was asking these questions not with the object of putting anybody in a difficulty but because we, as close friends of France, were necessarily interested in what would take place. The second question he would like to put was to ask whether the head of the French Government could say if the use of the French Air Force over German territory was contemplated. This would necessarily involve entering into active hostilities with Germany.

M. Daladier said he had certainly considered the possibility of air attack. In all countries where fighting had taken place recently there had been air attack. This had been particularly violent in Spain, where General Franco had had aerial superiority for months. In spite of the destruction of property and human lives, his Air Force had not, however, so far won the war, which had already gone on for two years and might last still longer.

Sir John Simon said he would repeat his question again as it seemed to have been misunderstood. He had already asked for information as to what France contemplated might be the use of her land forces. He now wished to ask in what way French air forces might be used. Did the French Government contemplate using their air forces against Germany, which would involve a declaration of war and active hostilities? This would not be a purely defensive measure, such as manning the Maginot Line, but would constitute an attack. He therefore wished to ask whether the French Government contemplated such a use of their air force against Germany.

M. Daladier, replying to Sir John Simon, said he would consider it ridiculous to mobilise French land forces only to leave them under arms doing nothing in their fortifications. It would be equally ridiculous to do nothing in the air. He thought that, in spite of Herr Hitler's recent declarations, the German system of fortifications was much less solid than Herr Hitler had indicated. It would be several months before the Siegfried Line would be really strong. He thought, therefore, that, after French troops had been concentrated, an offensive should be attempted by land against Germany. As regards the air, it would be possible to attack certain important German military and industrial centres, which could easily be reached, in spite of certain legends which had been spread abroad.

M. Daladier wished, however, to make it clear that he wished to speak more of the moral obligations of France than of war and strategy. A discussion of the military problem might be pursued later. It should be remembered that only a week ago he had agreed, without consulting the other members of his Government, to dismember a friendly country bound to France not only by treaties but by ties centuries old. This was France's sacrifice to the peace of Europe. Like a barbarian, M. Daladier had been ready to cut up this country without even consulting her and handing over 3½ million of her population to Herr Hitler. It had not been a very agreeable task for him. It had been hard, perhaps a little dishonouring; but he had felt this was better rather than to begin again what we had seen 20 years ago. He had been there, although he would not stress this point. But it was a different thing

to give Herr Hitler the possibility of saying to his people that, without firing a shot, Great Britain and France had handed over to him  $3\frac{1}{2}$  million men. This would not suffice for him. M. Daladier asked at what point we would be prepared to stop and how far we would go. Like the British Ministers, M. Daladier was seeking peace, and if means could be found by which Herr Hitler could take over these areas which the French Government had agreed to abandon to her [*sic*], even if this involved adding to French sacrifices, he would agree. The Czechs were, however, human beings. They had their country and had fought at our side. We must ask what they thought of all this. Perhaps formulae of conciliation might be found, although he feared that all conciliation was only preparing for the destruction of Western civilisation and of liberty in the world. If, however, it was possible to make fresh concessions, then they should be studied with the Czechoslovak Government. There was one concession, however, he would never make, and that was that marked on the map,<sup>3</sup> which had for its object the destruction of a country and Herr Hitler's domination of the world and of all that we valued most. France would never accept that, come what might.

Sir John Simon wished to assure M. Daladier on behalf of all the British Ministers how deeply and truly sensible they were of the profound considerations which he had so eloquently put forward. They shared his feelings on this question in every way. But the question that he had put had not been put on the assumption that we should agree to Herr Hitler's map. It followed from the conception expressed so powerfully by M. Daladier that the French Government would never agree to it. Therefore, as a practical matter, we wanted to know, as we thought we were entitled to ask as friends and neighbours, if that situation had arisen and Herr Hitler's proposals had not been accepted, what the French Government proposed to do. If the answer were that France proposed to fight, they must have decided by what broad methods they proposed to open the struggle.

Asked to repeat his question by M. Daladier, Sir John Simon explained that if the conclusion were reached that Herr Hitler's plan should be rejected, there then came the question of what was to be done. We felt, as a practical matter, that that question led to the further question, would the decision be to fight Germany and, if so, by what general means and methods was that to take place?

M. Daladier said he understood Sir John Simon had asked two separate questions. In the first place, he had asked if the plan in Herr Hitler's memorandum were rejected what would the French Government propose instead? In the second place, if they had no proposal to make, by what practical means would they oppose by force German force?

As regards the first question, he, for his part, thought that we could put into force the system decided upon in London a week ago. In spite of Goethe's ballad, the dead did not move as fast as the living. We had pro-

<sup>3</sup> Note in the original: M. Daladier was referring to the proposed arrangements in Moravia.



posed an international commission; Hitler had replied that this was a very dilatory procedure and that much time would be lost. He had referred to decades having passed in which nothing had been done, and obviously considered that an international commission was an institution smacking of Geneva which would lead nowhere. It might, however, be possible to satisfy Herr Hitler on this point. We might, for example, set up a commission within three days, set it to work at once with a time-limit of a week or ten days within which its work should be finished. Without any further delay those areas in which the Sudeten inhabitants were in a definite majority might be occupied by German troops. No honest man could object to such a procedure and retain his sincerity.

Such a procedure would avoid the events which M. Daladier clearly foresaw, although he did not wish to be a Cassandra of the Greek tragedy. He was convinced that the British Government would be dragged into war in spite of themselves and without wishing it. We had authorised Czechoslovakia to mobilise. The Czechoslovak troops were in their fortifications in the Sudeten territory. We must remember that the Czechoslovak troops thought that their country had been abandoned and regarded the French as traitors. Was it likely that they would give up these fortifications to the Germans? Herr Hitler's proposals would, therefore, lead straight to war. A possible alternative was the proposal for an international commission put forward in London last week. Herr Hitler might perhaps regard this as reasonable if arrangements were made for a very rapid German occupation. The Czechoslovak troops would thus be able to retire in obedience to a decision of the international commission and not giving way before German invasion. Thus war would be avoided. Why should not this proposal be put to Herr Hitler? Surely we need not accept every demand he chose to make and encourage him still further to regard himself as almost divine? It should surely be possible to effect a gradual occupation, as had been done after the war in the case of Silesia, Danzig, Denmark, and even in French territory given up by the Germans. If Herr Hitler were given satisfaction in this way by a progressive occupation as a result of a decision of the international commission, he could still say to his people that Germany had taken back the Sudeten areas. This would be a reasonable formula of conciliation. Like the British Ministers, M. Daladier hated war. Therefore he proposed that an international commission should be set up with a definite time-limit for its activities, so that within a week the German districts might be evacuated by the Czech troops and occupied by the German troops peacefully. But in present circumstances, without some such plan, the Czechoslovak troops would not evacuate these territories in response to Herr Hitler's demands without fighting. He declared quite frankly that he would not return to France having agreed to the strangulation of a people. The principle of granting autonomy to the Sudeten population was painful to the French Government, but it could be accepted. He could not, however, accept Herr Hitler's proposal for the green areas in the map, particularly those relating to Moravia. Herr Hitler's proposals for the areas marked red might be accepted, and under the sugges-

tion he had advanced for an international commission German troops might enter those areas within a week.

Sir Samuel Hoare fully understood M. Daladier's feelings and hoped he would not think that anyone present liked the German proposals. He wished to know a little more about the suggestion M. Daladier had just made. Did he mean that, even if the Germans did not accept it, we should nevertheless at once send out an international commission to make enquiries quickly, and so enable Herr Hitler and the German Army to take possession of many areas in the near future? If he had understood the suggestion aright, it seemed worthy of consideration, particularly as it kept the initiative in our hands. It would show Herr Hitler that it was not in our mind to make further delays, and, even if he disliked the suggestion, it would be very difficult for him to refuse it, when it would be clear that in two or three days the international commission would be ceding to him the territory in question.

M. Daladier said Sir Samuel Hoare had correctly interpreted his proposal.

Mr. Chamberlain felt he must say that, although this proposal sounded extremely reasonable, he had just returned from his conversation with Herr Hitler and was clear in his own mind that the proposal would not be acceptable to the Chancellor. Mr. Chamberlain doubted whether it would in practice be possible to get an international commission together, to send it to the territory concerned and carry out the cession of these areas within a few days. He must remind the French Ministers insistently that, in Herr Hitler's view, this question had gone on far too long (he had mentioned having had no satisfaction for twenty years) and that he was determined to reach a solution at once. If Mr. Chamberlain had not gone to Germany, he was convinced that Herr Hitler would have already attempted a military invasion. As a result of Mr. Chamberlain's efforts, Herr Hitler had postponed such action, but only for a few days. Mr. Chamberlain did not believe that Herr Hitler would accept such a proposal if it were put to him.

Mr. Chamberlain asked what we would then do if we found ourselves faced, as we well might in two or three days, with a German invasion of Czechoslovakia. It might take place very rapidly. With their usual thoroughness, the Germans had taken every step to effect a rapid conquest. He thought we might find this German advance into Czechoslovakia taking place hour by hour at a much more rapid pace than we had contemplated. The Germans might be in Prague and advancing to the frontier they had already laid down for themselves very shortly. He feared we might be faced with this situation in a few days. Since the British Government were bound to be interested, in view of the close relations between our two countries, they must know what attitude the French Government intended to take. One conceivable course would be for the French to mobilise and await events. But M. Daladier had indicated that the French plan was to undertake offensive operations against the Siegfried line with the object of crossing it and also to bomb German factories and military centres. He wished to speak quite frankly and say that the British Government had received disturbing accounts

of the condition of the French air force, and of the capacity of French factories to maintain supplies for the air force, which was likely to suffer great losses in the early days of a war. He therefore felt he must ask what would happen if war had been declared and a rain of bombs descended upon Paris, upon French industrial districts, military centres and aerodromes? Could France defend herself, and was she in a position to make an effective reply? He would also like to ask what assurances France had received from Russia. The British Government for their part had received very disturbing news about the probable Russian attitude. And again, the tone of the French press to-day did not sound very bellicose and gave the impression that France was not prepared to be faced with the contingency of war in a very few days. It would be poor consolation if, in fulfilment of all her obligations, France attempted to come to the assistance of her friend but found herself unable to keep up her resistance and collapsed. These were very disturbing considerations, and he would be grateful if his French friends could give precise information on these points.

M. Daladier was glad to reply to these questions. He was always hearing of difficulties. Did this mean that we did not wish to do anything? We were, after all, giving Herr Hitler  $3\frac{1}{2}$  million Sudeten Germans. He said this was not enough and wanted everything else as well. Was the British Government ready to give in and to accept Herr Hitler's proposals? Were they ready to bring pressure to bear in Prague which would lead to the disappearance of Czechoslovakia or to her strangulation, which amounted to much the same thing? These were questions which would have to be put, but in view of the questions which had already been put to him regarding the French army and air force he assumed a readiness to do something.

<sup>4</sup>[Pour en revenir aux différents points soulevés par le Premier Ministre, le Président du Conseil déclare que ce n'est point dans certains journaux qu'il faut chercher la véritable attitude de l'opinion, mais dans l'attitude des Français qui, après avoir fort bien compris, malgré un premier mouvement d'étonnement, pourquoi l'on sacrifiait la région des Sudètes à la paix, ne comprendraient point aujourd'hui, en revanche, que l'on livrât un peuple faible à un adversaire supérieur en nombre. Un million de ces Français ont gagné les frontières et les casernes sans une hésitation: c'est là qu'il faut chercher l'expression du véritable sentiment national.]

We must face up to the facts and decide what we wanted. If Herr Hitler put forward certain demands must we agree to them? He would then be master of Europe and after Czechoslovakia would come Roumania and then Turkey. He might even turn to France and take Boulogne and Calais. He might even afterwards land in Ireland. This was not an impossible operation as it had been accomplished in the past. Must we always give way to Herr Hitler's ultimata? If we were agreed to do so it was useless to have meetings and appear to discuss these questions. He was ready to agree to certain measures of conciliation which were in accordance with moral sentiments,

\* M. Daladier's remarks were here incorrectly reported in the English text. The French text has therefore been substituted.

but a moment came to call a halt and that moment had in his opinion come. The French Government had been unanimous on this point.

The question of French aviation had been raised as so often before. Many British M.P.s had visited Paris recently, although he did not think many French Deputies visited London. He did not know how far these M.P.s were representative of Great Britain. He thought they were probably not, but as they were usually friendly and pleasant they were well received in France. He did not himself receive them but other people did and they then made speeches. One such visitor who had been a general in the British army had declared that the French air force did not exist and he had quoted figures in support of this view. M. Daladier admitted that the French air force, so far as material and not pilots was concerned, was inferior to the German air force. France only had a population of 40 million, and so far as her industry was concerned she lacked coal and other essential materials. Clearly German industrial potential was greater than that of France. Nevertheless, France was perfectly capable of mobilising an air force and attacking Germany. The question of Russia had also been raised. As in the case of all distant countries, there was a tendency to exaggeration. Sometimes Russia was described as extremely strong and rich. At other times as very weak. He thought the truth lay somewhere between these extremes. He understood Russia had 5,000 aeroplanes. At least 800 had been sent to Spain, and whenever they had arrived they had always put the Italian and German planes out of action. The fronts of the Spanish war had recently been stabilised largely owing to the arrival of 300 Russian planes which had prevented German and Italian air action. Two hundred Russian planes had been sent to Czechoslovakia from Russia, flown by Czech pilots and ordered by the Czechoslovak Government. French observers had seen these planes and thought them good. He thought that Russian air production was roughly equivalent to that of Germany. Colonel Lindbergh, who had been much quoted recently, had said that the Russian air force had not the same prototypes as the German air force, but war was not conducted with planes capable of travelling at 500 miles per hour. What really mattered was the total number, and in this respect Russia could hold her own with Germany.

M. Daladier thought we were all too modest, and Great Britain as much as anyone. She did not talk of her navy, of the weapon of blockade or of war by sea. Germany was very inferior in this respect even to the French navy. For France also had a navy and with the help of the British navy she could take effective action. These military considerations, however, left out of account the main question facing them. This was as follows: Mr. Chamberlain had indicated that Herr Hitler had spoken his last word. Did the British Government intend to accept it? That was a possible policy, but if it was to be accepted without discussion then at least we should send for a representative of the Czechoslovak Government and ask their opinion before sacrificing them.

Sir Samuel Hoare felt we were still faced by the same difficulty. He did

not disagree with many of the views expressed by M. Daladier. But supposing war were to break out to-morrow and Great Britain as well as France were engaged, what step could be taken to prevent Czechoslovakia being overrun? So far as Great Britain was concerned, the effect of naval action was necessarily very slow. Russia might possess a large number of aircraft, but was it certain what Russia would do? Would she come in with the full force of her aviation? (M. Daladier at this point indicated she would do so.) He feared whatever action was taken would be slow in its effects. Within a few weeks the greater part of Czechoslovakia would be destroyed. Before this happened he would like to consider whether any means of preventing this destruction existed. Therefore, his personal view would be that the action of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom would very much depend upon the answer to the question how could the overrunning and destruction of Czechoslovakia be prevented.

M. Daladier said he did not wish to enter too far into technical discussions, but he would like to put three questions to the British Ministers:—

(1) Did His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom accept Herr Hitler's plan?

(2) Did His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom think of bringing pressure to bear on the Czechoslovak Government to accept Herr Hitler's plan when we knew that they would certainly not do so and would prefer to die rather than accept it?

(3) Did His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom think that France should do nothing?

Mr. Chamberlain said he would reply to these questions in order. As regards (1) it was not for the British or the French Governments to accept or reject Herr Hitler's proposals. That was a matter for the Czechoslovak Government. We were not the people to whom the proposals had been addressed and we could not therefore accept or reject them. Our rôle was confined to transmitting them to the Czechoslovak Government as we had done. As regards (2) we had received their preliminary reply from the Czechoslovak Government. He understood that they did not wish us to take any action until a longer and more detailed document had been sent to us. But the preliminary reply was an unqualified refusal of Herr Hitler's proposals in that form. He would answer M. Daladier's questions by saying we could not exert pressure upon the Czechoslovak Government since we had no means to compel them to reverse their decision. We were concerned with what would happen when that decision had been transmitted to Herr Hitler. As regards (3) he did not think it was for the British Government to express an opinion, but that it was rather for the French Government to decide. Obviously their decision must entail certain very serious consequences for the British Government. If the British Ministers had seemed to press the French Ministers unduly, it was because they must have clearly before them the circumstances in which His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom

would have to take their decision. He would like to ask how long the French Ministers would be able to remain in London.

M. Daladier replied that they would like to remain as long as possible, but in the circumstances they could only remain a very short time.

Mr. Chamberlain asked whether it would be possible to ask General Gamelin to come across to England to-morrow.

M. Daladier replied that this would certainly be possible.

Mr. Chamberlain asked whether General Gamelin could speak also for the Air Force, or whether someone else would have to come for that purpose.

M. Daladier replied that General Gamelin, as Generalissimo and Chief of the General Staff, could speak for all three Services.

Mr. Chamberlain explained that the British Cabinet had met that afternoon, but had adjourned its meeting because it wished to hear something of the attitude of the French Ministers before reaching any conclusion. He had therefore asked the Cabinet to return for further consultation after the French conversations had begun but before they had been concluded. He asked the French Ministers whether they would have any objection to withdrawing for half an hour whilst the British Cabinet met.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.40 p.m.

The meeting was resumed at 12.35 a.m. when it was decided to adjourn it again until 10.0 a.m. on the 26 September (and to ask General Gamelin to come over for this further meeting).

#### No. 1094

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

*No. 330 Telegraphic: [? by telephone] [C 10602/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 25, 1938, 10.15 p.m.*

Following from Sir A. Cadogan:

In order to complete our information as to the feeling among public men, I should be glad if you would ascertain without delay the views, for instance, of General Gamelin, General Weygand, Marshal Pétain, M. Herriot, M. Blum, M. Reynaud, M. Marin, M. Laval, M. Chautemps, and Cardinal Verdier. At the same time I should be glad if your Commercial Counsellor and your Financial Adviser would collect the views of commercial and financial circles respectively.

We do not entirely understand your reference in your telegram No. 292<sup>1</sup> to 'small but noisy and corrupt war group here'. By 'war group' you surely do not include all those who feel that France must carry out her treaty obligations to Czechoslovakia. If so, what precisely does this group consist of and what does it represent and what are your reasons for describing it as 'corrupt'?

<sup>1</sup> No. 1076.

No. 1095

*Note by Mr. Strang*  
[C 10670/1941/18]

*September 26, 1938*

On the Secretary of State's instructions, I telephoned to the Czechoslovak Minister last night to say that Lord Halifax presumed that M. Masaryk was not proposing to publish the letter<sup>1</sup> handed to himself and the Prime Minister that day. I reminded him that the Czechoslovak Government had said that they were going to transmit their reply to the German Government through the Prime Minister. His Majesty's Government expected them to adhere to this. Immediate publication of M. Masaryk's letter might destroy all hope of negotiation, of which even now we did not despair.

M. Masaryk assured me that there was no intention of publishing the letter at this stage. He had impressed upon the French, to whom a copy had also been given, and upon M. Benes, the importance of not saying anything about this letter to the press.

I then telephoned to the Legation at Prague to ask them to impress this upon the Czechoslovak Government. Mr. Troutbeck told me that he was surprised to hear that M. Masaryk had sent in a reply. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that afternoon, the Czech reply would not be ready until the evening of September 26.

The Legation then made enquiries as to this discrepancy and were informed that while the letter handed in by M. Masaryk did constitute the Czech reply, a further explanatory memorandum was being prepared. This would be ready on the evening of September 26, and was the paper to which the Legation had referred.

The Legation added that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were anxious that His Majesty's Government should take no decision until this second document was in their hands and had been examined.

We now learn from H.M. Legation (Prague Tel. No. 741<sup>2</sup>) that they have just been informed that the communication from the Czechoslovak Minister constitutes the full reply, and that there is nothing more to add.

W. STRANG

<sup>1</sup> No. 1092.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. This telegram was received by telephone at 9.30 a.m. See No. 1091, note 2.

No. 1096

*Record of an Anglo-French Conversation held at No. 10 Downing Street on  
September 26, 1938, at 11.20 a.m.*

[C 11264/1941/18]

Present: (as in No. 1093)

Mr. Chamberlain, who had had a personal conversation with M. Daladier<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No record of this conversation can be found in the Foreign Office archives. In a

and General Gamelin, and had asked General Gamelin to discuss matters further with Sir T. Inskip,<sup>2</sup> opened proceedings by saying he thought it was now evident that the situation was moving very swiftly towards its culminating point. Herr Hitler was making a speech to-night, which would be broadcast to the world. No doubt the nature of this speech would reveal his final intentions. We now knew that the Czechoslovak Government were determined to resist. The French Government had said plainly that if so they would fulfil their treaty obligations. We had said publicly several times that we could not afford to see France overrun or defeated by Germany, and that we would come to her assistance if France were in danger. His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom had no intention of going back on what they had said. But so long as there remained even a slender chance of peace, we must not neglect any opportunity of securing it. Mr. Chamberlain had therefore taken it upon himself this morning to send Sir H. Wilson, his confidential adviser, to Herr Hitler with a personal message<sup>3</sup> from himself. He hoped Sir H. Wilson would see Herr Hitler in the course of the afternoon. Mr. Chamberlain would ensure that those elements in Germany who favoured moderation should know what was being done. He proposed during the course of the day to publish the fact that this mission had been despatched. He did not propose at this stage to publish what Sir H. Wilson would say to Herr Hitler. He was the bearer of a written message which might have to be published later. But for the present he thought it better to say nothing, since we were dealing with an individual of peculiar temperament. The only chance of achieving success with him was to avoid anything which he might regard as a public humiliation. Mr. Chamberlain hoped that the step he had taken would commend itself to his French colleagues. He himself did not build any great hopes upon it, but perhaps there was a small chance that it might have some success, especially as we had been told that there were many doubts felt in Germany itself as to whether the game was worth the candle. Undoubtedly, a strong anti-war feeling existed among the general population in Germany, which he had been able to observe for himself.

M. Daladier expressed himself entirely in agreement with the Prime Minister's initiative, which he fully approved, as, indeed, he had approved every step that he had hitherto taken. The French Government had also had news from Germany emanating from official personalities which showed that a very real anxiety existed there. After Mr. Chamberlain's journey and the great sacrifices made by France and Czechoslovakia, there had been a great feeling of joy throughout Germany. People had said that without fighting

short verbal report to the Cabinet of the conversation the Prime Minister said that he had told M. Daladier of the message which he was sending to Herr Hitler through Sir H. Wilson, and of the verbal warning which Sir H. Wilson was being instructed to deliver if Herr Hitler's response to the message were unfavourable. (See below Nos. 1115, 1116, 1118, and 1129.) M. Daladier agreed with the terms of the message and of the warning.

M. Daladier was given a written record of this message and of the terms of the verbal warning.

<sup>2</sup> See No. 1143, note 1.

<sup>3</sup> See No. 1097.



or suffering and loss Germany had taken Sudeten territory and 3½ million Sudetens. Among the German people, and even in very influential circles, it was not understood why Herr Hitler, purely for reasons of prestige, should wish to impose a sort of humiliation when he had obtained all his requirements. This was the news received by the French Government this morning, and in its light he thought it very possible that the Prime Minister's initiative might have a happy result.

Mr. Chamberlain hoped so, but for the present we could only await further news. Meanwhile, he would ask the Foreign Secretary to raise another question which concerned the attitude of Poland.

Lord Halifax said he could raise this point in two sentences. The French Government were at one with us in recognising its importance. He wondered what their view would be as to the usefulness of the two Governments, whose solidarity had once again been established before the world by this meeting, making a simultaneous or a common approach in some form to the Polish Government regarding the attitude which, in certain circumstances, we should be obliged to take. This depended to some extent upon the information in the possession of the two Governments as to Dr. Benes's attitude towards Polish claims. We had no precise information ourselves on this point beyond what had appeared in the press. From this it seemed that Dr. Benes had sent a special courier by air to the President of Poland. If he had done so that would seem to indicate that he had in mind the possibility of reaching some arrangement with Poland for meeting Polish claims to Teschen. It would, perhaps, seem desirable, if this information were confirmed, to make our position clear at once to the Polish Government, saying that we welcomed the *démarche* made by Dr. Benes, but that we could not tolerate any further aggressive action against Czechoslovakia by Poland, and making it plain where our two Governments would stand in certain circumstances.

M. Bonnet was in complete agreement with Lord Halifax. He thought it very important and, indeed, urgent that such a *démarche* should be made to the Polish Government. It was most desirable that the two Governments should act quickly and energetically. He could confirm that Dr. Benes had, in principle, accepted the renunciation of Teschen in order to give satisfaction to the Polish Government. It was, however, not impossible that Polish ambitions might rise. They might think Teschen was not enough. It was, therefore, extremely important in his view that a communication should be made to them by the British and French Governments saying we could not agree to the Polish Government refusing so generous and favourable an offer from Dr. Benes. He wished, however, to make it quite clear that Dr. Benes had made it a condition of his offer that after so generous a cession the Polish Government would guarantee not to intervene against Czechoslovakia.

M. Daladier said that Marshal Rydz-Smigly, the head of the Polish Army, had visited France two years ago and an agreement had been reached with Poland. France never had any money for herself but always had money for others. She had, therefore, found means to lend 2 milliard francs to Poland.

It was an extraordinary thing reminiscent of St. Martin cutting his cloak in two. The French Government had naturally asked Marshal Rydz-Smigly what would happen if it chanced that Czechoslovakia were attacked by Germany. M. Daladier had mentioned that rumours had reached the French Government that in such an event Poland might also attack Czechoslovakia. Marshal Rydz-Smigly had replied in writing—the French Government had a signed document to this effect—that he gave his word of honour as a soldier that he would never permit the Polish Army to attack Czechoslovakia. General Gamelin had this undertaking in his possession. M. Daladier hoped that it would be kept, especially if we were able to secure the renunciation of Teschen to Poland by Dr. Benes. There would thus be no reason for a Polish attack upon Czechoslovakia. This was a very important consideration, as the Polish Army contained 50 divisions. These divisions, added to the 34 Czech divisions, were equivalent to more than half the German Army when fully mobilised. In the event of a European war Poland and Czechoslovakia, acting together, could contain half the German Army and thus prevent it being released for attacks against the Western Powers. M. Daladier therefore fully approved Lord Halifax's proposal.

Mr. Chamberlain said he would like to interrupt this discussion one moment. Sir Horace Wilson would be leaving the aerodrome in a few minutes, and Mr. Chamberlain would like to issue a notice to the press on the following lines:—

'The Prime Minister has had further consultations with the French Ministers this morning.

'The Prime Minister, with the full approval of the French Ministers, has decided to make a personal communication to the German Chancellor, and Sir Horace Wilson has left this morning for Berlin.'

M. Daladier agreed to this communication to the press.

Lord Halifax said he would like to ask two questions regarding M. Bonnet's recent statement. First, could we take it that his information about Dr. Benes's proposal in connection with Teschen was firm information? Secondly, might we use it at Warsaw?

M. Bonnet said he was in a position to indicate to Lord Halifax that Dr. Benes's proposal was a firm one on the condition he had mentioned that Poland gave a guarantee to Czechoslovakia. He thought it would certainly be very helpful to make use of it at Warsaw. He knew that certain Poles had wider ambitions. He would, however, like to make it plain that the Czechoslovak Government were not so much concerned with a guarantee in the future as with an assurance, valid for the present moment, that Poland would not intervene against Czechoslovakia.

M. Daladier, although he fully approved the communiqué which had been prepared regarding Sir Horace Wilson's mission, feared that if this communiqué were spread abroad and nothing had been done by way of

explanation or reassurance with the Czechoslovak Government, they might interpret it as indicating that they were being completely neglected. They might be very distressed to learn of it without their having been consulted and might then resort to desperate action. He thought it would be desirable to consider their feelings. He would not propose to let them know the exact terms of Sir H. Wilson's communication, but only that we should assure them that it contained nothing disagreeable to them and nothing about which they need worry. He thought it should be possible to find a formula on these lines to prevent their feeling that everything was lost and taking some desperate action. We must not forget that we had a new Government in Prague headed by a General. He therefore proposed that we should immediately send for M. Masaryk.

Mr. Chamberlain agreed with M. Daladier and said that action would be taken directly with the Czechoslovak Government in Prague and also through M. Masaryk in London. He would propose to inform the Czechoslovak Government that this communiqué in no way prejudiced their position. His appeal to Herr Hitler was merely intended to substitute methods of negotiation for violent military action.

Lord Halifax read to the meeting the draft of a telegram which it was proposed to send to Warsaw, the text of which is attached as Annex C.<sup>4</sup> It was agreed that this telegram should be sent off.

M. Daladier had desired in this connexion that the opening passages of the draft should be so worded as to show that Dr. Benes had given the French Ministers to understand that, if the Polish Government would guarantee not to attack Czechoslovakia, then he would be prepared to consider the cession of Teschen and to make a public declaration to this effect.

Mr. Chamberlain said their labours were now concluded and once more, as on many previous occasions, he had been very happy to note that they had found themselves in such complete agreement. He would like to assure MM. Daladier and Bonnet how deeply he appreciated their action in crossing the Channel to meet the British Ministers. If circumstances had been different, he would gladly have gone to Paris himself. But he had only just returned from Germany and had an enormous number of things to do here. That was the reason he had asked the French Ministers to make the journey. But he was none the less grateful to them for their kindness in coming over here and concluding these conversations with the British Ministers.

M. Daladier said that, on the contrary, it was the French Ministers who thanked the Prime Minister for the indefatigable ardour he had shown in his recent activities in the cause of peace. It was no long journey that they had made, and it was always a pleasure to meet men as frank and as loyal as the British Ministers.

<sup>4</sup> Not printed. For the text of the telegram contained in this Annex see No. 1102.

The following communiqué was then agreed upon and the meeting adjourned at 12.7 P.M.:—

‘A further meeting was held this morning between the French and British Ministers, at which a full accord was established on all points.

‘General Gamelin, who had been called over for special consultation, also called on the Prime Minister and subsequently had an interview with the Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence.’

**No. 1097**

*Letter from Mr. Chamberlain to Herr Hitler<sup>1</sup>*

[C 11493/1941/18]

*26th September, 1938*

My dear Reichskanzler,

In my capacity as intermediary I have transmitted to the Czechoslovakian Government the Memorandum which Your Excellency gave me on the occasion of our last conversation.

The Czechoslovakian Government now inform me that, while they adhere to their acceptance of the proposals for the transfer of the Sudeten-German areas on the lines discussed by my Government and the French Government and explained by me to you on Thursday last, they regard as wholly unacceptable the proposal in your Memorandum for the immediate evacuation of the areas and their immediate occupation by German troops, these processes to take place before the terms of cession have been negotiated or even discussed.

Your Excellency will remember that in my letter to you of Friday last I said that an attempt to occupy forthwith by German troops areas which will become part of the Reich at once in principle and very shortly afterwards by formal delimitation, would be condemned as an unnecessary display of force and that in my opinion if German troops moved into the areas that you had proposed, I felt sure that the Czechoslovakian Government would resist and that this would mean the destruction of the basis upon which you and I a week ago agreed to work together, namely, an orderly settlement of this question rather than a settlement by the use of force. I referred also to the effect likely to be produced upon public opinion in my country, in France and, indeed, in the world generally.

The development of opinion since my return confirms me in the views I expressed to you in my letter and in our subsequent conversation.

In communicating with me about your proposals, the Government of Czechoslovakia point out that they go far beyond what was agreed to in the

<sup>1</sup> This letter was delivered by Sir H. Wilson. See Nos. 1115, 1116, and 1118. The text of the letter was telegraphed to Sir R. Lindsay at 6.45 p.m. on September 27 for communication to President Roosevelt.

so-called Anglo-French plan. Czechoslovakia would be deprived of every safeguard for her national existence. She would have to yield up large proportions of her carefully prepared defences and admit the German Armies deep into her country before it had been organised on the new basis or any preparations had been made for its defence. Her national and economic independence would automatically disappear with the acceptance of the German plan. The whole process of moving the population is to be reduced to panic flight.

I learn that the German Ambassador in Paris has issued a communiqué<sup>2</sup> which begins by stating that as a result of our conversations at Godesberg Your Excellency and I are in complete agreement as to the imperative necessity to maintain the peace of Europe. In this spirit I address my present communication to you.

In the first place, I would remind Your Excellency that as the Czechoslovakian Government adhere to their acceptance of the proposals for the transfer of the Sudeten-German areas there can be no question of Germany 'finding it impossible to have the clear rights of Germans in Czechoslovakia accepted by way of negotiation'. I am quoting the words at the end of Your Excellency's letter<sup>3</sup> to me of Friday last.

On the contrary a settlement by negotiation remains possible and, with a clear recollection of the conversations which you and I have had and with an equally clear appreciation of the consequences which must follow the abandonment of negotiation and the substitution of force, I ask Your Excellency to agree that representatives of Germany shall meet representatives of the Czechoslovakian Government to discuss immediately the situation by which we are confronted with a view to settling by agreement the way in which the territory is to be handed over. I am convinced that these discussions can be completed in a very short time and if you and the Czechoslovakian Government desire it, I am willing to arrange for the representation of the British Government at the discussions.

In our conversation, as in the official communiqué issued in Germany, you said that the only differences between us lay in the method of carrying out an agreed principle. If this is so, then surely the tragic consequences of a conflict ought not to be incurred over a difference in method.

A conference such as I suggest would give confidence that the cession of territory would be carried into effect but that it would be done in an orderly manner with suitable safeguards.

Convinced that your passionate wish to see the Sudeten-German question promptly and satisfactorily settled can be fulfilled without incurring the human misery and suffering that would inevitably follow on a conflict I most earnestly urge you to accept my proposal.

I am,  
Yours faithfully,  
NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN

<sup>2</sup> No. 1086.

<sup>3</sup> No. 1053.

## CHAPTER XI

Sir H. Wilson's conversations of September 26 and 27 with Herr Hitler: negotiations preceding the Munich Conference: the Munich Conference: Mr. Chamberlain's conversation of September 30 with Herr Hitler. (September 26-30, 1938.)

### No. 1098

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 26, 12.40 p.m.)

*No. 526 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10702/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 26, 1938

I telephoned this morning to Field-Marshal Göring at Karinhall and informed him of meeting fixed for Sir H. Wilson on the part of myself with Chancellor at 5 p.m. I told him while I was unaware of exact contents of this personal message it certainly constituted a last effort for peace and I urged him to use his influence with a view to its favourable reception. I referred to difficulties of Prime Minister who had not only to negotiate with Czechoslovakian Government but also to deal with strong war feeling in England.

Göring's attitude was that Czechoslovakian Government had agreed to surrender Sudeten territory and were on their part seeking general war to avoid having to do so.

Present situation in view of Czech mobilisation, disorders and refugees could not be prolonged after October 1. He mentioned as a fact that if there was general war Poland would be on German side.

After some discussion in which I pointed out that it was procedure which was cause of trouble not cession of territory which was definitely foreseen, he agreed to telephone me and if possible arrange a meeting this evening after he had come to Berlin and had seen Chancellor.

### No. 1099

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 26, 2.20 p.m.)*

*No. 302 Telegraphic [C 10727/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 26, 1938, 12.48 p.m.

Your telegram No. 330.<sup>1</sup>

Following for Sir A. Cadogan.

I will get into touch with as many of these persons [? as possible], and perhaps others, and report their latest views.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1094.

Public opinion clearly changes rapidly with rapid changes in situation. I must point out in this connexion that my telegrams Nos. 290<sup>2</sup> and 292<sup>3</sup> were sent before Herr Hitler's latest demands were known to myself or to French public opinion or even to Government (see my telegram No. 301<sup>4</sup> of this morning).

By 'small but noisy and corrupt war group' I meant the Communists who are paid by Moscow and have been working for war for months.

A well-known French Minister has also been advocating a preventative war for many months.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1075.

<sup>3</sup> No. 1076.

<sup>4</sup> Not printed. In this telegram Sir E. Phipps reported that 'since Hitler's last demands have become known here, there is a distinct change in the attitude of public opinion. The press to-day is practically unanimous in declaring that the Anglo-French proposals must be considered as the limit of concessions to Hitler.'

### No. 1100

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 360 Telegraphic: [? by telephone] [C 10943/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 26, 1938, 1.5 p.m.*

Mr. Strang's conversation with Mr. Troutbeck this morning.<sup>1</sup>

You should explain to the Czechoslovak Government that the communication which is being made to the German Chancellor through Sir Horace Wilson<sup>2</sup> in no way prejudices the position of the Czechoslovak Government. The proposal is simply to substitute a process of negotiation between the Czechoslovak and German Governments for violent military action.

Repeated to Berlin No. 417.

<sup>1</sup> See No. 1095.

<sup>2</sup> See No. 1097.

### No. 1101

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 26, 1.5 p.m.)*

*No. 744 Telegraphic: by wireless [C 10707/4786/18]*

PRAGUE, *September 26, 1938*

10.30 a.m.

General Staff report this morning only a few minor incidents in frontier area. Order is well maintained. Response to mobilisation call on Sudetens and Hungarians is said to be satisfactory but details not yet available. According to General Staff present movements of German forces indicate three concentric attacks, the main attack from Linz . . .<sup>1</sup> Vienna area northwards, the second from Bad Litz [*sic*]<sup>2</sup> area southwards through Zwittau and third through Eger gap east by south. The lines of these attacks when pro-

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>2</sup> The reference is uncertain. Possibly B. Skalitz.

longed converge on Fraszcky Brod [sic].<sup>3</sup> Further mobilisation of German army is believed to have been ordered at noon September 25. Czech army mobilisation appears to be proceeding smoothly and according to plan.

<sup>3</sup> The reference is uncertain. Possibly Nemecky Brod.

No. 1102

*Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)*

*No. 72 Telegraphic [C 10829/2319/12]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 26, 1938, 1.40 p.m.*

French Government and His Majesty's Government have reason to believe that, if Poland would give a guarantee of an attitude of benevolent neutrality towards Czechoslovakia, Czechoslovak Government might be prepared to agree to the cession to Poland of Teschen and would announce this fact.

2. It would seem to the two Governments that this should meet all legitimate claims of Poland. The French and British Governments trust that Poland will give the guarantee in question.

3. In any event, they would desire to make plain to the Polish Government that if this offer were made they would not consider the Polish Government justified in taking any violent action against Czechoslovakia in pursuance of any further claim or for any other reason.

4. Your French colleague is instructed to make with you joint representations to the Polish Government in the above sense. Please concert with him and act as soon as possible.<sup>1</sup>

Repeated to Prague, Paris, and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> The documents dealing with the attitude of His Majesty's Government towards the Polish and Hungarian claims upon Czechoslovak territory will be printed in Volume III of this Series.

No. 1103

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received September 26, 1.45 p.m.)*

*No. 528 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10703/1941/18]*

BERLIN, *September 26, 1938*

I submit that it is absolutely essential that if His Majesty's Government contemplate war in support of Czechoslovak Government's refusal to accept German plan as it stands Sir H. Wilson and I should be authorized to make this quite clear to the Chancellor this afternoon.

If we do so it is equally essential to suggest alternative to German plan which will give immediate measure of satisfaction to the Chancellor.

We could for instance suggest to the Chancellor that he might say in speech tonight that in the interests of peace and provided Czechs demobilized forthwith and will withdraw military police etc. from the area indicated, and by October 1, he will be willing to restrict occupation by German troops to



limited area of say Egerland or at most from Sudeten fringes west of longitude 15° in north round bulge to longitude 15° in the south.

We would have to undertake to persuade Czech Government to accept this proposal.

#### No. 1104

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 26, 1.50 p.m.)*

*No. 745 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 11483/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 26, 1938

Your telegram No. 332.<sup>1</sup>

By the time your message was received events had developed so rapidly that I have thought it better to use discretion given and refrain from action for the time being. Just now Czech Government might for example find only cold comfort in last paragraph as it stands, particularly in view of request conveyed in my telegram No. 673.<sup>2</sup>

My French colleague was not instructed to deliver any similar message.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1026.

<sup>2</sup> No. 998.

#### No. 1105

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 26, 2.0 p.m.)*

*No. 303 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10704/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 26, 1938

United States Ambassador who is an intimate friend of President Roosevelt urges that it would have an excellent effect on the latter if the Prime Minister, M. Daladier and Dr. Benes could send suitable replies immediately to Washington to the President's peace appeal.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Bullitt feels strongly this should be done before 5.0 o'clock today so as to precede Hitler's speech.

<sup>1</sup> On September 26 President Roosevelt sent a message to Herr Hitler and Dr. Benes stressing the disastrous consequences of war, recalling the obligations of the Kellogg Pact and other treaties for pacific settlement, and appealing to them not to break off negotiations to that end. Similar messages were also addressed to the Governments of the United Kingdom, France, Poland, and Hungary.

#### No. 1106

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 26, 2.15 p.m.)*

*No. 304 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10713/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 26, 1938

My telegram No. 301.<sup>1</sup>

The temper in which the country has responded to the far-reaching emergency measures decided upon by the Government is admirable and the public is showing calm and resolution.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. See No. 1099, note 4.

Opinion has undergone a complete change since Hitler's last demands have become known. It was at first thought that the substance of Hitler's demands having been granted, his last memorandum only concerned questions of procedure, and a rupture over this was considered inconceivable. Its publication showing that not procedure but vital principles are at stake has come as a severe shock and there is a growing feeling that if Hitler insists upon trying to dictate terms going far beyond the Franco-British proposals, this is unacceptable.

I have just seen President of the Chamber who confirmed the complete swing-over of public opinion since Hitler's demands had become known. He assures me that an overwhelming majority in the Chamber will now be for resistance. He says there is no kind of enthusiasm for war in the country, but a firm and melancholy determination to resist. M. Herriot's personal opinion is that in case of German aggression upon Czechoslovakia the matter should be brought before Council of the League in the first instance, so as to prevent Germany from claiming that France and Great Britain are the aggressors if they go to the assistance of Czechoslovakia.

#### No. 1107

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 26)<sup>1</sup>*

*No. 306 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10754/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 26, 1938

My telegram No. 303.<sup>2</sup>

Ministry for Foreign Affairs inform me that M. Daladier's reply to President Roosevelt has been published and suggests that Prime Minister might also publish his reply.

<sup>1</sup> The hour of receipt of this telegram is not recorded.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1105.

#### No. 1108

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 26, 3.40 p.m.)*

*No. 747 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10939/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 26, 1938

Following is a summary of a statement broadcast by the Czechoslovak wireless on September 25 as published in to-day's press:—

The latest accusation made by Czechoslovakia's enemies was that her mobilization had been designed to wreck the Godesberg negotiations. This was wholly false. The true story based not only on the official note of the Czechoslovak Government but also on official communications and steps of the British and French Governments was as follows:—

On the night of September 20–21 the Czechoslovak Government accepted

the Franco-British Plan, though it went far beyond the basis recently set forth by the S.G.P.<sup>1</sup> They accepted those hard conditions because of the insistent advice of the British and French Governments in the hope that by accepting the conditions which Mr. Chamberlain had agreed with Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden they would assure peace not only for Czechoslovakia but for the whole world. The two Governments had added that, should the Czechoslovak Government not accept the plan, France would not be able to fulfil her treaty obligation to come to Czechoslovakia's assistance if she were attacked, and England could show no further interest in her fate. With the positive reply of the Czechoslovak Government Mr. Chamberlain then went to visit the German Chancellor. Yet Mr. Chamberlain had hardly communicated the positive reply at Godesberg when he received entirely different proposals which went far further than had been agreed at Berchtesgaden. This was the usual German tactics.

Germany's new proposals and conditions which Mr. Chamberlain brought from Godesberg were communicated to the Czechoslovak Government early on Sunday. When Mr. Chamberlain accepted the new conditions at Godesberg he was already aware that neither the British nor French Governments would be in a position to recommend their acceptance to Czechoslovakia and that it was not possible to advise Czechoslovakia any longer to remain passive and not prepare for defence. So on Friday September 23 at 6.16 p.m. the French and British Ministers informed our Government on the official instructions of their Governments that neither England nor France could undertake the responsibility of advising us to remain passive and that they could no longer recommend us not to make the necessary military preparations. At the same time they made it clear to us that they communicated to us the Godesberg memorandum, but without any further advice as to our future procedure. This meant that the Great Powers themselves do not regard the new conditions as a reliable basis for reaching an agreement.

The Czechoslovak Government thereupon immediately met at 8 p.m. on Friday and decided that the international situation demanded measures of defence for all eventualities, more particularly in view of the increased activity of armed bands from across the frontier. The frontier guards had up to then received stringent orders to abstain from all action and particularly not to use their arms even in the case of serious threats. The Czechs had in no single case violated foreign territory. On the other hand the violations from the other side were clearly reaching such proportions that, if the situation were allowed to develop further without resistance, a conflict might have developed automatically. The Czechoslovak Government reached the conclusion that if they continued in their passivity they might be held responsible for having thereby made possible a breach of the peace.

Accordingly a few hours after the visit of the British and French Ministers the Government decided on Friday night to proclaim mobilization. They decided on this measure solely in order to create conditions which would enable negotiations to proceed in calm and peace. No reasonable person

<sup>1</sup> Sudeten German Party.

could believe that the mobilization of whole [sic] Czechoslovakia could threaten anybody.

We therefore repeat with all emphasis that the Czechoslovak mobilization was not ordered against the advice and counsels of the great Western European Powers without whose approval the Czechoslovak Government had taken no step throughout the whole course of the present conflict. Propaganda to the contrary was only designed to destroy peace.

#### No. 1109

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received September 26, 3.40 p.m.)*

*No. 750 Telegraphic: by wireless [C 10725/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 26, 1938

Suggestion which is being put about here presumably from German sources that memorandum hardly raises question of principle but relates in substance merely to execution of surrenders to which Czechoslovak Government have already agreed (i.e. to matters of procedure).

Actually according to explanations just given more or less casually at Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Secretary of French Legation it appears that effect of German memorandum would be to cut Czechoslovakia to pieces and leave her more completely at the mercy of Germany than had been yet realised in either of our Legations. Not only would frontier waist north of Brunn be reduced to a width of sixty kilometres but all main railway lines connecting Bohemia with Slovakia would pass through territory in German occupation. Other strategic railways parallel to frontier would also pass into German occupation and line from Prague to frontier at Znaim would be cut by an area in German occupation at Iglau (Jihlava). Incidentally total population of territory as a whole in areas marked green<sup>1</sup> is stated to be in great majority Czech . . .<sup>2</sup>

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> See map I at end of this volume.

<sup>2</sup> The last word of this telegram is uncertain.

#### No. 1110

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received September 26, 3.50 p.m.)*

*No. 749 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10721/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 26, 1938

My French colleague was summoned by President Benes early Sunday morning and found him quite beside himself at nature of German memorandum.

Impression of my French colleague is that . . .<sup>1</sup> national humiliation may play a big part in determining further attitude of Czechoslovak Government, for example, President Beres gave him to understand that they would not want to negotiate direct with German Government but to act through proposed International Commission. French Minister concluded that Czech Government would therefore be ready to accept international force for maintenance of order composed preferably of Scandinavians (other than Danes who have their own minority question) and nationals of other small neutral countries.

Please repeat to Berlin immediately.

Repeated to Berlin by Foreign Office.

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.

### No. 1111

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*  
*No. 419 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10730/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 26, 1938, 4.10 p.m.

Following for Wilson from Prime Minister.

Since you left, French have definitely stated their intention of supporting Czechoslovakia by offensive measures if latter is attacked. This would bring us in: and it should be made plain to Chancellor that this is inevitable alternative to a peaceful solution.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the afternoon of September 26 Lord Halifax authorised the issue of the following communiqué to the Press: 'During the last week Mr. Chamberlain has tried with the German Chancellor to find the way of settling peacefully the Czechoslovak question. It is still possible to do so by negotiations.

The German claim to the transfer of the Sudeten areas has already been conceded by the French, British and Czechoslovak Governments, but if in spite of all efforts made by the British Prime Minister a German attack is made upon Czechoslovakia the immediate result must be that France will be bound to come to her assistance, and Great Britain and Russia will certainly stand by France.

'It is still not too late to stop this great tragedy, and for the peoples of all nations to insist on settlement by free negotiation.'

### No. 1112

*Letter from Czechoslovak Minister to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 26)*  
*[C 11132/1941/18]*

CZECHOSLOVAK LEGATION, September 26, 1938

Sir,

I have communicated to my Government the Prime Minister's question which he put to me yesterday afternoon and for which he wished an answer. This question of the Prime Minister's, as I understood it, I transmitted to Prague as follows:

'Although Herr Hitler did say that the memorandum handed to the Czechoslovak Government by His Majesty's Government was his last word, and although Mr. Chamberlain doubts very much that he could induce Herr Hitler to change his mind at this late hour, the Prime Minister may, under circumstances, make a last effort to persuade Herr Hitler to consider another method of settling peacefully the Sudeten German question, namely, by means of an international conference attended by Germany, Czechoslovakia and other Powers which would consider the Anglo-French plan and the best method of bringing it into operation. He asked whether the Czechoslovak Government would be prepared to take part in this new effort of saving the peace.'

To this question I have now received the following answer of my Government:

'The Czechoslovak Government would be ready to take part in an international conference where Germany and Czechoslovakia, among other nations, would be represented, to find a different method of settling the Sudeten German question from that expounded in Herr Hitler's proposals, keeping in mind the possible reverting to the so-called Anglo-French plan. In the note which Mr. Masaryk delivered to Mr. Chamberlain yesterday afternoon, mention was made of the fact that the Czechoslovak Government, having accepted the Anglo-French note under the most severe pressure and extreme duress, had no time to make any representations about its many unworkable features. The Czechoslovak Government presumes that, if a conference were to take place, this fact would not be overlooked by those taking part in it.'

My Government, after the experiences of the last few weeks, would consider it more than fully justifiable to ask for definite and binding guarantees to the effect that no unexpected action of an aggressive nature would take place during the negotiations, and that the Czechoslovak defence system would remain intact during that period.

I have, &c.,  
JAN MASARYK

No. 1113

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 26, 5.40 p.m.)

*No. 529 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10759/4786/18]*

BERLIN, September 26, 1938

Following for Director of Military Operations and Intelligence from Military Attaché.

Begins.

Returned 1 a.m. from Prague. On the Czech side of the frontier south of Dresden all roads blocked and mined to the depth of at least five kilometres.

Traffic from Zinnwald to near Teplitz possible only on foot. (? Fighting)<sup>1</sup> with Freikorps . . .<sup>1</sup> south of Zinnwald on Saturday night when I was passing through on foot. At dusk last night saw armed Freikorps crossing the frontier from Germany into Czechoslovakia. Czech frontier guards . . . ed.<sup>1</sup> Czech mobilization appears to be proceeding smoothly. Saw over one thousand reservists joining at T[h]eresienstadt late Saturday night. Much work being done on anti-tank obstacles at positions nineteen kilometres and thirty-seven kilometres north of Prague. Big blocks and mines south of Teplitz-T[h]eresienstadt. They are guarded by S.O.S.<sup>2</sup> and many of them are anti-Hitler Sudeten Germans. Gain general impression Czechs' morale not very good. Certainly not if forced to fight alone.

On the German side road blocked and some infantry at Kipsdorf. Anti-aircraft batteries in position on the hills south of Dresden. Much anti-aircraft ammunition going south by road from Berlin Saturday afternoon. Not many soldiers in the town in Dresden but mostly in field service uniform and included reservists. At 11 p.m. last night at . . .<sup>1</sup>kau saw two columns of empty heavy requisitioned M.T. totalling three hundred and fifty heavy lorries mostly with trailers from all over Germany and seventy omnibuses mostly from Berlin. Saw Prince Ulrich Kinsky at Dresden last night. Most pessimistic and considered war practically inevitable.

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>2</sup> Straž Obrany Statu, the Czech local defence corps, composed partly of gendarmerie and customs guards, and partly of specially enrolled civilians.

#### No. 1114

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 26, 6.25 p.m.)*

*No. 753 Telegraphic: by wireless [C 10751/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 26, 1938

My telegram No. 750.<sup>1</sup>

Herr Kundt told First Secretary of French Legation a week or ten days ago that in his opinion the ethnical line in North West Bohemia passed approximately through Lubenz [*sic*, ? Gablonz] and Böhmisches Leipa (Česká Lípa).

This line is substantially more favourable to the Czechs than red area on German map.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1109.

#### No. 1115

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax  
(Received September 26, 7.20 p.m.)*

*No. 530 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10787/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 26, 1938

Following for Prime Minister from Sir Horace Wilson.

Very violent hour. He is clearly determined to make great passionate

speech tonight and was most impatient. On hearing translation of second paragraph of letter<sup>1</sup> he got up to walk out and it was only with difficulty he was persuaded to listen to any more and then only with insane interruptions. We made all the points possible including willingness to put into practice quickly whatever terms in the meantime arranged by discussion.

2. On pressure he agreed that meeting between Czech and German representatives could take place but only on the assumption that the Czechoslovak Government accepted the memorandum including October 1. This was repeated many times.

3. He would give tomorrow and Wednesday for the discussion but again only those contemplated in paragraph two<sup>2</sup> of the memorandum.

Repeated to Prague and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> See No. 1097.

<sup>2</sup> It seems probable that this should read: 'paragraph three, subsection (2)'. See No. 1068.

#### No. 1116

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 26, 7.15 p.m.)

No. 530 (part II). *Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10787/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 26, 1938

Following is continuation of my immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

4. In view of intense emotion and frequent references to tonight's speech it seemed better not to deliver special message and I am to see him again tomorrow morning. We asked him to leave loophole in the speech but I doubt whether there will be one. Unless there is such a loophole I presume we should deliver message in suitable terms and come away.

5. If you think suggested meeting should be put to Prague please communicate with them direct. There was however no indication that there was room for compromise or even modification. All that would be discussed would be method of implementing German memorandum integrally.

6. References to yourself were pleasing but he made it clear that he regarded the issues as going far beyond anything that is personal and in any case he would not wait beyond October 1 for complete evacuation. At one stage he intimated that unless evacuation was agreed to by Wednesday afternoon occupation might begin before October 1.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1115.

#### No. 1117

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 26, 10.20 p.m.)

No. 531 *Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10752/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 26, 1938

We think it is for consideration whether to advise Czechs immediately to communicate direct with German Government offering to meet them under



paragraph two<sup>1</sup> of memorandum to discuss cession in accordance with Franco-British plan, offering to evacuate at once Egerland as symbolic of agreement. No doubt they would have to be ready to demobilise or at any rate to withdraw troops but these points would be raised if meeting took place.

<sup>1</sup> See No. 1115, note 2.

### No. 1118

*Notes of a Conversation between Sir Horace Wilson and Herr Hitler at Berlin on September 26, 1938, 5.0 p.m.*<sup>1</sup>

[C 11970/11169/18]

(Sir N. Henderson, Mr. I. Kirkpatrick, Herr von Ribbentrop, and Herr Schmidt were also present)

The interview began by Sir Horace Wilson handing to Herr Hitler a short manuscript introductory letter from the Prime Minister.

Sir Horace Wilson then said that before asking the interpreter to read the further letter from the Prime Minister (copy attached as an annex<sup>2</sup>) he would like to make a few observations to explain the background and the situation in England which had called forth that letter. The German memorandum had, as the Prime Minister had anticipated at Godesberg, been published. Opinion in England had been profoundly shocked at its terms.

Herr Hitler interrupted to say that in that event it was no use talking any more.

Sir Horace Wilson asked Herr Hitler to listen to his remarks. When the Prime Minister spoke in his letter of the situation being extremely serious he was referring also to the difficulties he was experiencing in England.

After the Prime Minister had returned from Berchtesgaden he had believed that Herr Hitler and himself could reach agreement on terms which would fully meet German wishes and have the effect of incorporating the Sudetenland in the Reich. He had succeeded in bringing his colleagues, the French Government and the Czech Government to his way of thinking, because he had convinced them that Herr Hitler and himself had agreed upon a solution within the framework of peace. The country accepted Mr. Chamberlain's proposals because they trusted him to see that the solution would be on these lines.

Herr Hitler interrupted to vociferate in staccato accents that the problem must be solved forthwith without any further delay.

Sir Horace Wilson continued that the Prime Minister fully appreciated this, but the source of the difficulty lay in the manner in which it was proposed to proceed.

<sup>1</sup> These notes were made by Mr. Kirkpatrick. The date of receipt at the Foreign Office is not recorded. They are inserted here for convenience of reference.

<sup>2</sup> Printed as No. 1097.

Here Herr Hitler made gestures and exclamations of disgust and impatience.

Sir Horace Wilson said that he must emphasise again that the Prime Minister fully appreciated Herr Hitler's feelings and his insistence on speed, but the fact was that it was the way in which the proposals were to be carried out which had shocked and roused British opinion.

At this point at Sir Horace Wilson's request Herr Schmidt began to translate the Prime Minister's letter. When Herr Schmidt came to the words 'the Czechoslovak Government . . . regard as wholly unacceptable the proposal,' Herr Hitler left his chair and made to leave the room, muttering that it was no use talking further; the time for action had come.

Sir Horace Wilson begged him to listen to the whole of the letter from which he would see clearly that the Prime Minister understood his impatience and was providing for a quick solution.

Herr Hitler brushed these remarks aside with the angry interjection that he could not continue to tolerate a situation which brought 20,000 fresh refugees to Germany every day. M. Masaryk, he declared, branching off on to another tack, had proclaimed in London his intention to overthrow Mr. Chamberlain.

Sir Horace Wilson endeavoured to pacify Herr Hitler and to continue his remarks, but he was interrupted once more by the Chancellor.

Herr Hitler declared that it was a question of giving to Germany something in theory but of boggling and delaying the moment it was a question of giving it in practice. Germany was being treated like niggers; one would not dare treat even the Turks like that. 'On the 1st October I shall have Czechoslovakia where I want her.' If France and England decided to strike, let them strike. He did not care a farthing.

Sir Horace Wilson said that the Prime Minister was appealing to Herr Hitler.

Herr Hitler interrupted to say that it would be better to address an appeal to M. Benes since it was abundantly clear that the Czechoslovak Government had not the slightest intention of giving up an inch of the territory.

Sir Neville Henderson said that the British Government would see to it that the Czechs did hand over the territory.

Herr Hitler indicated by gesture dissent.

Sir Neville Henderson repeated that His Majesty's Government would see that the Czechs handed over the territory; they were in a position to put adequate pressure on the Czech Government. Moreover Herr Hitler surely trusted Mr. Chamberlain.

Herr Hitler retorted that unfortunately Mr. Chamberlain might be out of office any day. In any event, he only wanted action, not words. Soon he would have 400,000 refugees from Czechoslovakia in Germany.

At Sir Horace Wilson's request Herr Schmidt, who had not been allowed by Herr Hitler to continue reading Mr. Chamberlain's letter, resumed translating it, beginning at the point 'I learn that.' Herr Hitler only reluctantly agreed to listen to the translation. At the point where the letter talked of a meeting between representatives of the German and Czechoslovak Governments 'to discuss', Herr Hitler ejaculated: 'Incredible! Amazing!'

Herr Hitler, when the letter had been safely read, said that in his memorandum he had suggested that the Czechoslovak Government should send a representative to Germany. But it must be quite clear that this representative would have to discuss not modifications of the memorandum but merely means of executing it integrally. If he (Herr Hitler) could not get the territory otherwise, he would take it.

Sir Horace Wilson urged that the British and French Governments could ensure that the Czechoslovak Government should hand over the territory. In the circumstances it was quite clear that the Germans could achieve what they wanted by peaceful methods.

Herr Hitler interrupted to say that Signor Mussolini had sent him a message to-day to say that he admired his patience. But he could not further justify this patience before the German people. He simply could not allow M. Benes to lead him any further by the nose.

Sir Horace Wilson said that there was no intention of prolonging the negotiations or of allowing delay.

Herr Hitler said that there was not only the Prime Minister's position in England to consider, but his own in Germany. He would not tolerate further delaying tactics from Prague.

Sir Horace Wilson said that more was at stake than the position or prestige of individual statesmen. Mr. Chamberlain had hoped that he had found in Herr Hitler a man with whom he could settle this difficult problem by negotiation. Once more he begged Herr Hitler to turn the matter over in his mind and to accept the Prime Minister's proposal to have a Czechoslovak representative sent to Berlin.

Herr Hitler replied that the Czechs might certainly designate their representative, but it must be clearly understood that he came on the basis of the acceptance of the German memorandum and that there was no alteration in the German decision that the territory should be handed over and should be free of Czechs on the 1st October. Whether by negotiation or whether by the exercise of force, the territory would be free on the 1st October; and if he did not know for certain that the Czechs accepted in the course of the next two or three days the territory might well be cleared of Czechs before the 1st October. On reflection he must have an affirmative reply within two days, that was to say by Wednesday.

Sir Nevile Henderson asked, 'Midnight, Wednesday?'

Herr Hitler replied, 'No, by 2 p.m.'

Herr Hitler then asked whether it meant that we had abandoned our rôle of intermediary when we put forward the idea of direct Czech-German negotiations.

Sir Horace Wilson said it did not and that we still hoped to exercise a useful influence with the Czechs and we believed we could push through a quick agreement in accordance with the basic German requirements.

Herr Hitler then asked if he might put another question. Could he publish the fact that the Czechs had rejected his memorandum, or was it confidential?

Sir Horace Wilson and Sir Nevile Henderson explained that it was confidential because we still hoped to move the Czechs in the direction of a settlement. We hoped that in his speech Herr Hitler would not slam the door.

Herr Hitler replied that he hoped that Sir Horace Wilson would be present at the Sportpalast, where he could sense the feelings of the German people.

Sir Horace Wilson said that he doubted if he would have time to go, but he would certainly listen on the wireless.

Herr Hitler said that he must go in person or he would not get an impression of the intense feeling animating the German people.

Anyhow it was no use talking any further. The time for action had come.

Sir Horace Wilson said he would think over the position and would ask to be received again on the following day.

Herr Hitler indicated assent.

On the way to the door Herr Hitler started again to inveigh against the Czechs. He said that they had intercepted telephone messages from the Czech Minister in London to M. Benes advising the latter not to cede an inch but to play for time.<sup>3</sup> In the meantime opinion in England could be mobilised and Mr. Chamberlain could be overthrown. The epithets applied to Mr. Chamberlain and to Sir Horace Wilson could not be repeated in a drawing-room. Herr Hitler vociferated that, come what might, by negotiation or by force, Sudeten German territory would be in German military occupation on the 1st October.

Sir Horace Wilson, in taking leave of Herr Hitler, said that he would call upon him the following morning.

<sup>3</sup> The German Government communicated to His Majesty's Government the text of conversations on the telephone between Prague and London which they claimed to have intercepted. The statement by Herr Hitler reported in this document does not represent accurately the purport of the conversations. See also No. 1201.

No. 1119

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 27)*<sup>1</sup>  
*No. 621 Saving: Telegraphic [C 10755/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 26, 1938

My telegram No. 302.<sup>2</sup>

Financial Adviser finds that while there is no enthusiasm for war, people are resigned but resolute. Financial circles are much impressed by the smoothness of Saturday's semi-mobilisation and the spirit displayed by those called up as well as by the very marked improvement among the working classes. It is difficult to speak of financial opinion as finance has become of secondary importance, but Mr. Rowe-Dutton's friends are falling in behind the machine and hold that while every effort has been made to preserve peace, it may prove impossible.

Commercial Secretary finds that the opinion of the ordinary French business man has hardened during last few days, that the latter feels that Great Britain and France have gone to the limit of possible concessions, and that if France honoured her engagements to Czechoslovakia, he would follow, though perhaps not whole-heartedly. There is also a fatalistic feeling that war is inevitable now or later. The 'petit bourgeois' may feel disinclined to risk his life for Czechoslovakia, while most of the workmen are said to be in favour of France complying with her obligations, many of them believing that help would be forthcoming from Soviet Russia.

<sup>1</sup> This telegram and No. 1120 were sent by bag. They appear to have been received a little before 10.30 a.m.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1099.

No. 1120

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 27)*  
*No. 622 Saving: Telegraphic [C 10756/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 26, 1938

I met the French Ministers on their return from London and they both expressed to me their great satisfaction at their conversations with the Prime Minister, Your Lordship and other members of the Government.

Soon after seven o'clock this evening the Minister for Foreign Affairs summoned me to the Quai d'Orsay, and asked me to put to you the following questions on behalf of the French Government:—

Supposing that, as a result of German aggression on Czechoslovakia, France mobilised and proceeded to an act of war against Germany, will Great Britain:

1. Mobilise immediately and at the same time as France?
2. Introduce conscription?
3. Pool (mettre en commun) the economic and financial resources of the two countries?

M. Bonnet explained that he and M. Daladier had thought it best to put these questions after their return rather than verbally, so as to give time to His Majesty's Government to consider them carefully. They would be glad, however, for very early replies.

M. Caillaux, as you may remember, told me yesterday (my telegram No. 294<sup>1</sup>) that he would put question No. 2 to His Majesty's Government if he were President of the Council.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1083.

## No. 1121

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*  
*No. 423 Telegraphic: [? by telephone] [C 10752/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 27, 1938, 1.0 a.m.

Following for Wilson from Prime Minister.

Your message this evening and telegram 531.<sup>1</sup>

After violent attack on Benes we feel it is useless to ask Czech Government to approach Germans with fresh offer.

Story of tapped messages confirms general disbelief of Germans that Benes intends to carry out promises. Accordingly Prime Minister is issuing to the Press early this morning the following statement:

'I have read the speech of the German Chancellor and I appreciate his references to the efforts I have made to save the peace.

'I cannot abandon those efforts since it seems to me incredible that the peoples of Europe who do not want war with one another should be plunged into a bloody struggle over a question on which agreement has already been largely obtained.

'It is evident that the Chancellor has no faith that the promise made will be carried out. These promises were made, not to the German Government direct, but to the British and French Governments in the first instance.

'Speaking for the British Government we regard ourselves as morally responsible for seeing that the promises are carried out fairly and fully and we are prepared to undertake that they shall be so carried out with all reasonable promptitude, provided that the German Government will agree to the settlement of terms and conditions of transfer by discussion and not by force.

'I trust that the Chancellor will not reject this proposal which is made in the same spirit of friendliness as that in which I was received in Germany and which, if it is accepted, will satisfy the German desire for the union of Sudeten Germans with the Reich without the shedding of blood in any part of Europe.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No. 1117.

<sup>2</sup> A telegram was sent at 10 p.m. on September 27 to all His Majesty's representatives abroad instructing them to communicate this statement to the Governments to which they were accredited.

You may find it useful to discuss this proposal at your next interview.

We do not consider it possible for you to leave without delivering special message, in view of what we said to French, if you can make no progress. But message should be given more in sorrow than in anger.

#### No. 1122

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 27, 10.55 a.m.)

No. 307 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10804/1941/18]

PARIS, September 27, 1938

My telegram No. 302.<sup>1</sup>

I called last night on President of the Senate who naturally abhors war but feels that it is now practically unavoidable.

If we give way to Hitler's last demand we should only be postponing the evil day and he would then turn with renewed prestige and strength against France.

M. Jeanneney assured me feeling in the whole country though grave and even sad was absolutely firm. Realisation was general that it was either war now or a little later and that now we had much better chance of victory.

He does not fear Communist trouble in case of heavy air attacks.

Neither the President of the Senate nor the President of the Chamber think that Parliament will be summoned here at present; there is no actual demand for it even in Parliamentary circles. It will be for the Government to decide when they wish it summoned. The present idea would be not to make a formal declaration of war at the outset even in case of hostilities.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1099.

#### No. 1123

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*  
No. 424 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 11013/1941/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 27, 1938, 11.56 a.m.

1. My immediately following telegram<sup>1</sup> contains the text of the letter from the Czechoslovak Minister communicating the reply of the Czechoslovak Government to the German memorandum of September 23.

2. As His Majesty's Government undertook to place the German memorandum of September 23 before the Czechoslovak Government, they feel bound to communicate to the German Government the reply of the Czechoslovak Government to that memorandum.

3. You should make the communication to the German Government immediately.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. See No. 1092 for the text of the letter from the Czechoslovak Minister.

No. 1124

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 366 Telegraphic [C 10944/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 27, 1938, 12.30 p.m.*

My telegram No. 360.<sup>1</sup>

1. Czechoslovak Minister, to whom this explanation was given this morning, states that President Benes and the Czechoslovak Prime Minister would be grateful if they could be informed why, after several weeks of collective negotiation, for which the Czechoslovak Government had made such supreme sacrifices, a procedure seemed now to be proposed which *prima facie* looked like bilateral negotiation.

2. He has been informed in reply that when we spoke of 'a process of negotiation between the "Czechoslovak and German Governments"', we had in mind negotiation between the Czechoslovak and German Governments with which His Majesty's Government would be willing to be associated.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1100.

No. 1125

*The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received September 27, 1.20 p.m.)*

*No. 615 Telegraphic [C 10817/1941/18]*

ROME, *September 27, 1938<sup>1</sup>*

It might possibly be helpful if I were authorised to convey officially and immediately to Count Ciano the Prime Minister's declaration made after Herr Hitler's speech and to express on behalf of His Majesty's Government the hope that Signor Mussolini would use his influence to induce Herr Hitler to accept proposals contained therein.

May I act accordingly?<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The hour of despatch of this telegram is not recorded.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Perth was instructed at 11 p.m. on September 27 that, when communicating Mr. Chamberlain's statement to the Italian Government (see No. 1121, note 2), he could speak to Count Ciano on the lines suggested above.

No. 1126

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received September 27, 1.20 p.m.)*

*No. 534 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10816/1941/18]*

BERLIN, *September 27, 1938*

I saw Field-Marshal Göring after the meeting with Herr Hitler yesterday. It was quite evident from his attitude that every detail of the plan for occupy-



ing Sudeten districts was now finally prepared. He was neither nervous nor excited but absolutely confident that if the Czechs resisted their opposition would be overcome by overwhelming force in the briefest possible time.

I made no concealment of the inevitability of British participation if French were actively involved. Field-Marshal Göring's attitude was that Germany would make no attack on France and would remain strictly on a defensive which would cost the French very dear, that Siegfried Line was impregnable and that a blockade would have no tangible results.

He made the point that Herr Hitler was being attacked for having missed the opportunity of striking before the Czechs had mobilized, and that this was solely because he had had confidence in the Prime Minister's influence at Prague. I made the obvious retort to which Göring replied that it was a pity that the Prime Minister had brought no definite plan with him to Godesberg. I pointed out that this was because the Prime Minister had wished to concert plan with Herr Hitler himself but that the latter had given him no opportunity to do so.

Field-Marshal Göring also read to me passages from telephone conversations between Czechoslovak Minister in London and M. Benes,<sup>1</sup> particularly those indicating that the latter did not intend to surrender territory in any case and that former was working for the fall of present Cabinets not only in London but also in Paris if they did not support the Czechs.

It is quite obvious from this conversation with Field-Marshal Göring and also from a brief one which I had with General Bodenschatz that the die is cast, that British mediation is at an end and that if delegates do not arrive at Berlin with full authority to make the best terms they can on their own with Germans before 2 p.m. tomorrow, Wednesday, general mobilization will be ordered at that hour and occupation of Sudeten areas will begin immediately.

Apart from Italy, Hungary and Poland, of whose co-operation German Government seem definitely assured, Field-Marshal Göring told me that Japanese had undertaken to attack Russia if the latter came in against Germany while General Bodenschatz said that Yugoslavia would also be on German side.

If His Majesty's Government do not at this eleventh hour advise Czechs in the name of humanity and of Czechs themselves, since we cannot in practice help them, to make the best terms they can with Berlin, we shall be exposing Czechoslovakia to the same fate as Abyssinia. Moreover if we do not seize this last chance of pinning Herr Hitler down to his public statement yesterday<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See No. 1118, note 3.

<sup>2</sup> The passage in Herr Hitler's speech of September 26 ran: 'I am grateful to Mr. Chamberlain for all his efforts, and I have assured him that the German people want nothing but peace; but I have also told him that I cannot go back behind the limits of our patience. I assured him, moreover, and I repeat it here that when this problem is solved there will be no more territorial problems for Germany in Europe. And I further assured him that from the moment when Czechoslovakia solves its other problems, that is to say when the Czechs have come to an arrangement with their other minorities, peacefully and without oppression, I will no longer be interested in the Czech State. And that as far as I am concerned I will guarantee to it [or 'him']—we don't want any Czechs.' The last phrase contained an

that Sudetens are the last of his territorial aims in Europe we shall be exposing Central Europe to even worse things in the future.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

ambiguity. The actual words used by Herr Hitler, as mechanically recorded at the time, were: '... mich dann der tschechische Staat nicht mehr interessiert, und dass ich ihm dann garantiere, meinetwegen, wir wollen gar keine Tschechen', thus leaving it unclear what Herr Hitler was proposing. In the published version the words were altered to read: '... dass ich dann am tschech. Staat nicht mehr interessiert bin. Und dass wird ihm garantiert! Wir wollen gar keine Tschechen!' See Nos. 1134 and 1144.

**No. 1127**

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 27, 1.20 p.m.)

No. 535 *Telegraphic: by telephone* [C 10809/1941/18]

BERLIN, September 27, 1938

Following for Prime Minister from Sir H. Wilson.

Our interview this morning is delayed until 12.15. I feel sure that I shall be told that October 1 stands. In that event I shall say that I will at once report to you and that you will immediately inform Czechoslovak Government of situation for their decision.

2. It is now urgent that Czechoslovak Government should be told starkly how matters stand. I do not feel we can rely on M. Masaryk having made clear what you put to him on Sunday, that in any event nothing can prevent Czechoslovakia from being completely overrun. If they act now and they must act to-day under paragraph 2,<sup>1</sup> they can get a settlement that at least avoids that fate. Military Attaché has just returned from Czechoslovakia and is convinced that morale is poor and that resistance will prove to be feeble. This must be known to the French too and to Czech General Staff as it is clearly known here.

3. If Czechoslovak Government decides not to accept paragraph 2 of memorandum on grounds of humiliation their best course would seem to be to withdraw troops from areas to be occupied leaving Germany to effect a bloodless occupation. If they so decide it is important to make the announcement at latest tomorrow morning. They could say that they were doing this in the interests of European peace.

Repeated to Prague and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> See No. 1115, note 2.

**No. 1128**

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 27, 2.25 p.m.)

No. 536 *Telegraphic: by telephone* [C 10822/1941/18]

BERLIN, September 27, 1938

Following for Prime Minister from Sir H. Wilson.

At interview this morning I referred to speech and said you had noted

passages indicating that he had not overlooked your discussions with him. I then spoke on the lines of statement received this morning, showing you were still ready to make efforts for peace. Would he give me anything for you which you could use even at the eleventh hour?

2. His reply was that he could not depart from memorandum and that to avoid what we feared we should bring pressure upon Czechs to accept. The alternatives were clear and there were only the two.

3. I then said that I would report at once to you and that you would immediately inform Czechoslovak Government of the situation for them to decide.

4. Finally with suitable introduction about the hope that we and Germany might have been able to discuss and settle other matters, including all round economic settlement, I said that the future depended upon the course of events in the next few days and next few weeks, which would decide how far the conflagration spread and then, in what I hope was the tone you would wish, delivered the message, very slowly.

5. He listened quietly. He then said 'I do not intend to attack France. It therefore means that France will attack Germany and England, too, will attack Germany'. I repeated carefully the formula so as to leave no doubt as to sequence of events beginning with Czech refusal and ensuing attack by Germany, and in reply to questions made it clear that we have no precise knowledge as to French intentions, except in so far as they are shown in their statements and in the words I had used. Both he and Herr von Ribbentrop asserted firmly that they had no intention of attacking France. They were however ready for any eventuality.

6. Still quietly he pointed out the Czechs were responsible. This led to greater excitement and it seemed best to come away.

7. At the end he and I walked away; he sent thanks again to you for our efforts, could not believe that we and Germany could fall out over such a question, and finally begged that you would do all you possibly could to induce the Czechs to accept.

8. Interview confirms my view that Czechs should consider carefully the suggestion in paragraph 3 of telegram No. 535.<sup>1</sup>

Repeated to Prague and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1127.

## No. 1129

*Notes of a Conversation between Herr Hitler and Sir Horace Wilson at Berlin on September 27, 1938<sup>1</sup>*

[C 11050/1941/18]

Sir Horace Wilson said that he realised that the Chancellor had much to do and he proposed to be brief in his observations. He (Sir Horace Wilson)

<sup>1</sup> These notes were made by Mr. Kirkpatrick. They were received at the Foreign Office on September 28, and are inserted here for convenience of reference.

had listened on the wireless to Herr Hitler's speech and he desired to congratulate him on the reception he had received; it must be a wonderful experience for any man to receive such a reception.

Both the Prime Minister and he himself had noticed with appreciation the references Herr Hitler had made to the subjects mentioned by the Prime Minister. Herr Hitler would by now doubtless have seen the Prime Minister's statement which had been published in the English press.

Herr Hitler and Herr von Ribbentrop said that they had just seen it.

Sir Horace Wilson said that in the circumstances he would not waste time reading it but that he wished to call special attention to the passage in which the Prime Minister had said that he felt himself morally responsible for the execution of the obligation which the Czechs had taken upon themselves. He (Sir Horace Wilson) was going back to London now and he asked whether he could take any message in the light of the Prime Minister's statement.

Herr Hitler said, 'No; only that I thank the Prime Minister for all his efforts.'

Sir Horace Wilson said that he would now report to the Prime Minister. The latter's next step would be to inform the Czechoslovak Government of the situation and ask them to decide.

Herr Hitler said that they had only two courses: acceptance of the memorandum or rejection. The memorandum left them every possibility for their continued existence as an independent State. He (Herr Hitler) had given his word and he was in the habit of keeping his word, unlike M. Benes.

Sir Horace Wilson said that he understood the position perfectly and he would inform the Prime Minister.

There was, however, one more thing to say and he would try to say it in the tone which the Prime Minister would have used had he been himself present. Many Englishmen thought with him (Sir Horace Wilson) that there were many things which ought to be discussed between England and Germany to the great advantage of both countries. He would not waste time by enumerating these matters, but they included arrangements for improving the economic position all round. He himself and many other Englishmen would like to reach an agreement with Germany on these lines. He had been much struck, as also had many others in England, by a speech in which Herr Hitler had said that he regarded England and Germany as bulwarks against disruption, particularly from the East. In the next few days the course of events might go one way or another and have a far-reaching effect on the future of Anglo-German relations generally.

They were now faced with two alternatives. If the Czechs accepted the memorandum, well and good. If they rejected it, the question arose where would the conflict end?

Herr Hitler interjected that the first end would be the total destruction of Czechoslovakia.

Sir Horace Wilson continued by saying that, if the Germans attacked

Czechoslovakia, the French, as they had told us and as M. Daladier had stated publicly, would feel that they would be obliged to fulfil their treaty obligations. If that meant that the forces of France became actively engaged in hostilities against Germany (Herr Hitler interjected 'That means if France attacks, since I have no intention of attacking France'), the British Government would feel obliged to support her.

Herr Hitler and Herr von Ribbentrop both declared that since Germany did not wish to attack France, the case of British participation could only arise if France attacked.

Herr Hitler continued that what it boiled down to was that if France elected to attack Germany, Great Britain was under an obligation to attack Germany also. He could only take note of this communication.

Sir Horace Wilson said that it was clear Herr Hitler had not understood his statement. He would repeat it once more slowly as the wording was extremely important. The situation was as follows: if Czechoslovakia accepted, well and good. If she refused and Germany attacked Czechoslovakia, France, as she had informed us, would feel that she must fulfil her treaty obligations. (Herr Hitler interjected once more, 'Which means that France must attack Germany'.)

Sir Horace Wilson continued by pointing out that he was using a particular form of words with care since it was the form employed by the French in their communication. The French Prime Minister had not said that France would attack Germany; he merely talked of their fulfilling their obligations. We did not know exactly in what form the French would decide to fulfil their obligations, but if in the fulfilment of these obligations France decided that her forces must become actively engaged (Herr Hitler interjected, 'To attack'), then for reasons and grounds which would be clear to Herr Hitler and to all students of the international situation, Great Britain must be obliged to support her.

Herr Hitler repeated that it all boiled down to the following: if France attacked Germany, then Great Britain would support France and we should all be at war in six days. He (Herr Hitler) would, unless the Czechs accepted his memorandum, smash Czechoslovakia, then France would feel bound to fulfil her obligations and then Great Britain would also feel bound to fulfil her obligations. Speaking excitedly, he said that the real meaning was that if France decided to attack Germany then England would have to attack Germany also.

Sir Horace Wilson demurred, but,

Herr Hitler interrupted him to say that the Czechs were faced with two alternatives. But he was convinced that they would reject the memorandum because they were sure now of getting French and British support. He would repeat that he would smash Czechoslovakia if they rejected his proposals. Whereupon France would attack Germany; whereupon England would also attack Germany. So in six days we should all be at war with one another

simply because Czechoslovakia refused a proposal which meant the execution of obligations she had already undertaken.

Sir Horace Wilson repeated that we did not know what were the intentions of the French in regard to the form in which they carried out their treaty obligation.

Herr Hitler said that in any event he had made preparations for all emergencies. It was not for nothing that he had spent  $4\frac{1}{2}$  billion marks on fortifications in the West.

Sir Horace Wilson said that we must find a way to avoid war.

Herr Hitler said decisively that there was only one way and it was a simple way. It was to tell the Czechs categorically to stop their frivolous game of precipitating a world war and fulfil their undertakings. He used the term 'frivolous' because the Powers were faced with a situation in which a small nation was playing for a world war simply because it could not bring itself to carry out its promises. Speaking very bitterly Herr Hitler said that what he resented was that Czechoslovakia seemed to be more important in English eyes than Germany.

At this point Sir Horace Wilson rose to go; on the way to the door Herr Hitler made some agreeable references to the Prime Minister, the purport of which I was unable to catch.

#### No. 1130

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 27, 2.27 p.m.)*

*No. 759 Telegraphic: by wireless [C 10834/65/18]*

PRAGUE, September 27, 1938

Following for War Office.

General Staff estimate that Germany cannot spare more than about seventy-five divisions for attack on Czechoslovakia in the early stages if France co-operates. Military Attaché estimates this as affording about a two to one superiority which is not excessive in view of the defence and the interior lines of the Czech army. He considers an overwhelming air attack on road and railway bridges over river Morava to be a particularly dangerous probability. If successful it would virtually bisect country and separate main armies from their new arms factories in Slovakia.

#### No. 1131

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 27)<sup>1</sup>*

*No. 309 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10813/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 27, 1938

Ministerial Council now sitting but Minister for Foreign Affairs informs me that feeling is more optimistic in Government circles, where Prime Minister's statement<sup>2</sup> this morning is considered admirable and most helpful.

<sup>1</sup> The hour of receipt of this telegram is not recorded.

<sup>2</sup> See No. 1121.

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 27)<sup>1</sup>*  
*No. 311 Telegraphic: by wireless [C 10814/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 27, 1938

In a letter to the 'Temps' (Right) published on the evening of September 26 M. Flandin wrote that he was personally opposed to a military intervention by France in the conflict between the Sudeten Germans and Czechoslovakia. He hoped that France would not be faced with a *fait accompli* of inevitable war before Parliament had an opportunity of pronouncing itself.

If, M. Flandin stated, the Government proposed military assistance to Czechoslovakia it was clear that such assistance could only be accorded in so far as equivalent military assistance was agreed upon in application of Art. 16 of the Covenant, by other contracting parties who still recognised the validity of the Covenant, and especially by the British Empire. It was obvious that the French Government could not decree general mobilisation unless a similar measure were taken by the British Empire. This would involve the introduction of conscription by the latter. France's friend[? s] in Great Britain must be informed as no doubt MM. Daladier and Bonnet have already done that the French army could not support alone, or with the help of a small contingent, operations on three fronts. Without invoking the principle of equality of sacrifices, which would certainly be acknowledged by the British peoples, the French Government would have to draw up with the British Government a plan of intervention as rapidly as possible by units of the British army at least equal to those engaged in 1914/18, and in a much shorter time, for France would have to face a larger number of enemy divisions without a certain assistance by which she had then benefited.

<sup>1</sup> The hour of receipt of this telegram is not recorded.

### No. 1133

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 27)<sup>1</sup>*  
*No. 312 Telegraphic: by wireless [C 10815/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 27, 1938

My telegram No. 310.<sup>2</sup>

M. Leon Blum called on me this morning. He expressed the warmest admiration for the Prime Minister's continued efforts for peace and in particular Sir Horace Wilson's mission to Berlin yesterday and Mr. Chamberlain's statement this morning, with every word of which M. Blum agreed.

<sup>1</sup> The hour of receipt of this telegram is not recorded.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. In this telegram, telephoned at 12.30 p.m., Sir E. Phipps reported that in the opinion of Cardinal Verdier, 'apart from the Communists, nobody in France wants a war over the present issues. French are prepared to fight and will obey without exception if honour demands. But they do not consider it opportune or necessary and still refuse to believe that war will come.'

M. Blum said that neither he nor any Frenchman could understand how Hitler could make war if only a question of procedure were at stake. If such were the case moreover, war would be inconceivable. If, however, it became clear that Hitler meant to destroy the entire Czechoslovak State France would march to the last man without any war enthusiasm but with the firm conviction that war was inevitable and had therefore better come now and without previous dishonour. Spirit of reservists going to the Maginot line was admirable.

No. 1134

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 27, 5.30 p.m.)

No. 537 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10877/1941/18]

BERLIN, September 27, 1938

German Minister at Prague told Swedish Minister here today that for the first time for weeks past he was optimistic in view of reference in Herr Hitler's speech yesterday to guarantee for Czechoslovakia.<sup>1</sup> According to German Minister guarantee for Czech state was main consideration for Czechs themselves. He also pointed out that Herr Hitler did not attack Czechs as a whole but merely M. Benes and he believed it to be not out of question that latter would resign in interests of his country.

Swedish Minister begged that German Minister's name might not be mentioned.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> See No. 1126, note 2.

No. 1135

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 27, 5.40 p.m.)

No. 538 Telegraphic [C 10878/1941/18]

BERLIN, September 27, 1938

Your telegram No. 424.<sup>1</sup>

The fact is that Czech rejection was intimated at interview we had yesterday; it is therefore unnecessary and even unwise to communicate terms of refusal at this stage.

2. In any event, to transmit terms now would seem to Herr Hitler to close the door notwithstanding this morning's conversation. This might mean immediate invasion.

3. I suggest therefore and Sir H. Wilson agrees that I should defer acting on your telegram until you have considered the report of their conversation.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1123. Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes telephoned to Mr. Strang 'early in the afternoon' of September 27 that Sir N. Henderson was not acting on the instructions in telegram No. 424, and that he had taken this decision 'for reasons which were concurred in by Sir H. Wilson, who will explain them on his return'.



No. 1136

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 367 Telegraphic [C 11015/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 27, 1938, 5.45 p.m.*

Please immediately deliver following message from Prime Minister to Dr. Benes.

I feel bound to tell you and Czechoslovak Government that the information His Majesty's Government now have from Berlin makes it clear that German forces will have orders to cross Czechoslovak frontier almost immediately, unless by 2.0 p.m. tomorrow Czechoslovak Government have accepted German terms.

That must result in Bohemia being overrun and nothing that any other Power can do will prevent this fate for your own country and people, and this remains true whatever may be the ultimate issue of a possible world war. His Majesty's Government cannot take responsibility of advising you what you should do but they consider that this information should be in your hands at once.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

No. 1137

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

*No. 339 Telegraphic [C 11030/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 27, 1938, 6.0 p.m.*

My telegram to Berlin No. 428.<sup>1</sup>

Please immediately inform the French Government and urge them to support us in this effort to secure a reasonable procedure for settlement. Ambassador assured me this morning that he had no doubt French Government would concur in general line of such action.

Repeated to Prague and Berlin No. 430.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1140.

No. 1138

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 369 Telegraphic [C 11030/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 27, 1938, 6.0 p.m.*

My telegram to Berlin No. 428.<sup>1</sup>

Please immediately inform the Czechoslovak Government. The Czechoslovak Government having agreed in principle to cede territory in the Sudetenland to the Reich, we are now confronted with the difficulty of arriving at agreement on the actual procedure for transfer. The Czecho-

<sup>1</sup> No. 1140.

slovak Government have refused to consider the proposal made by Herr Hitler for military occupation of the whole area on October 1, and His Majesty's Government concur with them in thinking this unreasonable.

The present scheme, in the view of His Majesty's Government will afford possibility of working out the safeguards which they consider to be the essential conditions of the transfer, and they most earnestly urge the Czechoslovak Government to give their full co-operation with a view to putting this timetable into effect. His Majesty's Government are fully aware of the difficulty which the Czechoslovak Government may feel in accepting this proposal and of the material difficulties that there may be in the way of carrying it out. But they have come to the conclusion that they must adopt it and put it forward and take their full share of responsibility for its execution. The Czechoslovak Government must clearly realise that the only alternative to this plan if it could be agreed would be the invasion and dismemberment of their country by forcible means, and though that might result in general conflict entailing incalculable loss of life, there is no possibility that at the end of that conflict, whatever the result, Czechoslovakia could be restored to her frontiers of today.

Since above was drafted, later information has come into my possession on which I have sent my telegram No. 367.<sup>2</sup>

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1136.

### No. 1139

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 28, 9.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 313 Telegraphic [C 10868/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 27, 1938, 6.35 p.m.

M. Bonnet asked me this morning whether I could tell him the result of Sir H. Wilson's meeting with Herr Hitler so I gave him, in strict confidence and (? orally)<sup>1</sup>, gist of Berlin telegram No. 530.<sup>2</sup>

M. Bonnet expressed warmest approval of the Prime Minister's statement this morning. He feels that we must continue to keep the ball rolling unremittingly till October 1, so as to do everything humanly possible to avert a conflict for which both our countries are undoubtedly ill-prepared. French Ambassador Berlin reports today that public opinion there seems more hopeful of the possibility of avoiding war.

M. Bonnet therefore wonders whether the following compromise might be put forward by Great Britain and France:

1. Areas as mentioned in Anglo-French plan to be evacuated by Czechoslovakia on October 1 and to be occupied by German troops, in a measure to be agreed upon:

2. International Commission to begin delimitation of definite boundary as soon as possible.

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>2</sup> Nos. 1115-16.

M. Bonnet feels that the Czechoslovak Minister here is rather too zealous and is apt to work up public opinion against . . . (? M. Bonnet).<sup>3</sup>

Repeated to Berlin and Prague.

<sup>3</sup> The text is here uncertain.

No. 1140

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 428 Telegraphic [C 11030/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 27, 1938, 6.45 p.m.

In spite of your telegram No. 535,<sup>1</sup> His Majesty's Government feel that a last effort must be made to endeavour to persuade the German Government to accept some reasonable scheme for the handing over to them of the Sudeten territory cession of which has been approved in principle by the Czechoslovak Government.

As Prime Minister observed in his statement issued this morning, the chief burden of Herr Hitler's speech last night was that Czech promises are worth nothing and that Dr. Benes would never carry out his promises. His Majesty's Government wish to impress on Herr Hitler that he is dealing with them and with the French Government in this matter and not with the Czechoslovak Government. Herr Hitler has said that his patience is at an end and that he must take over the area by military occupation on October 1. This does not give time for working out the conditions on which cession has been agreed to, but no very long time should be required for this and His Majesty's Government suggest the following time-table, for the carrying out of which they would take their share of responsibility:—

I. German troops would occupy the territories of Egerland and Asch outside the Czech fortified line on October 1.

II. Meeting of German and Czech plenipotentiaries with a British representative at some town in the Sudetenland on October 3. British representative would have equal voting rights with his German and Czech colleagues.

On the same date meeting of International Boundary Commission consisting of German, Czech and British members.

On the same date, if possible, arrival of observers and again, if possible, British Legion.<sup>2</sup> Later four British battalions could be added. The observers, Legion and troops would be under the orders of the Boundary Commission.

The duty of the meeting of plenipotentiaries would be:—

(a) to arrange for the immediate withdrawal of Czech troops and State police:

(b) to lay down the broad lines for safeguarding minorities in the ceded territory and for defining their rights to opt and to withdraw their property,

<sup>1</sup> No. 1127.

<sup>2</sup> On September 25 the members of the British Legion of ex-Service Men offered, in the event of an agreement between the German and Czechoslovak Governments, to provide assistance in maintaining order in the areas concerned in Czechoslovakia.

similar arrangements being made for the German minority in the new Czechoslovakia:

(c) to determine the actual instructions, based on the Anglo-French plan, to be given to the International Boundary Commission for the delimitation of the new frontier with the utmost speed.

III. October 10, entry of German troops into the zone in which the plenipotentiaries shall have indicated that their arrangements are complete. This might be the whole area, but that might not be possible as early as October 10 as Czech forces might not have been completely withdrawn and there would be a risk of a clash with the incoming German forces. The International Boundary Commission must, however, have delimited the ultimate line by October 31 and the Czech forces and police must have been withdrawn over that line and the German military must have occupied up to that line by that date.

IV. The meeting of plenipotentiaries will have to consider whether further arrangements should be made for improving the frontier delimited by the Boundary Commission in October in order better to meet local geographical and economic requirements in the various localities. It would be for consideration whether local plebiscites would be necessary or desirable for this purpose.

V. As soon as possible negotiations to be started between Germany, Great Britain, France and Czechoslovakia, for the purpose (a) of arranging for joint measures for demobilisation or withdrawal of troops and (b) of revising Czechoslovakia's present treaty relationships and instituting a system jointly guaranteeing the new Czechoslovakia.

Please immediately submit the foregoing to Herr Hitler, adding that I submitted it at the same time to the French Government who have already, before seeing the details of it, intimated that they would agree to a scheme on these lines. I am at the same time transmitting it to the Czechoslovak Government with an intimation that in the opinion of His Majesty's Government this affords the only means of securing an orderly transfer of the territories which they have agreed to concede.

Repeated to Paris No. 338<sup>3</sup> and Prague No. 368.

<sup>3</sup> A copy of this telegram was also given to the French Ambassador.

### No. 1141

*Message communicated by the French Embassy<sup>1</sup>*

[C 10764/1941/18]

[*Telephone message sent at 7.45 p.m. from M. Daladier to the French Embassy giving the text of a communiqué which would shortly be published by Havas.*]

Members of the Delegation of the Radical Socialist Party who went this afternoon to see the President of the Council have stated that M. Daladier

<sup>1</sup> This message is undated, but was received on September 27.

informed the Delegation of recent events and of the latest news that had been received.

Several members having enquired what would happen if the conversations were adjourned or even broken off, the President of the Council stated that England and France would then certainly have to agree on the measures that could be taken.

If the Czechs were the victims of an unprovoked aggression, France would take immediately the necessary measures to go to her assistance (*la France prendra immédiatement les mesures d'assistance nécessaires*).

The statement for Havas contained two further paragraphs: the first stated that M. Daladier agreed to call Parliament to share the responsibilities of the Government as soon as circumstances made it possible; in the second the members of the Delegation expressed their entire confidence in M. Daladier.

### No. 1142

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 27, 7.50 p.m.)

*No. 540 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10879/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 27, 1938

Position is now crystal clear. If Czechoslovak Government have not before 2 p.m. tomorrow September 28 either accepted German plan or announced their settled intention to avoid actual hostilities by withdrawing their troops and police, etc., from Sudeten areas Herr Hitler will order general mobilisation and France will presumably follow suit.

If British nation desire to engage in war there is nothing to be done except to prepare for it. It is in any case quite useless to say anything more at Berlin.

If His Majesty's Government still desire to keep peace only possible course is strongest pressure at once at Prague and Paris. It is not question of what is reasonable or unreasonable but of hard facts.

Ruin of Czechoslovak nation is in any case inevitable unless one or other of courses indicated in first paragraph is taken. It is surely clear that French action cannot prevent this. Utmost action that French can take is some form or . . .<sup>1</sup> of limited offensive only result or even object of which can be to involve Great Britain in hostilities.

If this is accepted as axiomatic and provided always that British nation does not desire war, is it not essential to ensure that France should take no action without first consulting His Majesty's Government that is not calculated to have effective military result?

Finally although it is not within my province to discuss our military prospects, I feel it my duty to urge if policy of war is decided upon, we should adopt it without illusions as to strength of Germany. Collapse of civilian morale is not likely to occur for years and both the air force and air defence

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.

will prove (? more)<sup>2</sup> powerful than is thought in many circles, both in Germany and abroad.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

No. 1143

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

*No. 342 Telegraphic [C 11012/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 27, 1938, 8.30 p.m.*

Please immediately speak to Minister for Foreign Affairs or, if you consider it better, to President of Council on following lines.

2. General Gamelin made it plain to us on Monday<sup>1</sup> that, in his view, if German forces now invaded Czechoslovakia, Czech resistance is likely to be of extremely brief duration. This disturbing estimate is confirmed by our Military Attaché in Berlin who has just returned from Czechoslovakia and reports that he is convinced that morale is poor and that resistance will prove to be feeble. The Attaché has just reached London and has reported his visit to me personally. If therefore our efforts for peace fail, and instead German troops enter Czechoslovakia on Thursday, as now seems probable,

<sup>1</sup> On Monday, September 26, General Gamelin had an interview with the Prime Minister. No record of this conversation has been traced in the Foreign Office archives, but in a short verbal report to the Cabinet of the conversation the Prime Minister said that, in General Gamelin's view, the Czechoslovak army would give a good account of itself, and that if it were forced to retire to the eastern part of the country it would continue to exist as a fighting force. The Prime Minister does not appear to have reported any estimate by General Gamelin of the possible duration of Czech resistance. Later on September 26 General Gamelin attended a meeting presided over by the Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence, during part of which the Service Ministers were also present. General Gamelin then said (according to the interpreter's notes), in answer to a question how long Czechoslovakia would hold out against Germany, that 'it would be impossible to give any accurate estimate, owing particularly to the immense importance of Poland, in that Polish opposition would make a German offensive from the narrow salient of Silesia extremely difficult. . . . His opinion of the Czechoslovak army (34 divisions) was that it was a good army, good personnel, excellent morale of the people fighting for their lives, and an efficient command.' At the end of the meeting, General Gamelin was asked the same question, and replied: 'Were he a politician and not a soldier he would be able to give a figure, but as it was he was only prepared to say she could hold out certainly for a few weeks, but perhaps not for a few months. The whole question in fact depended on the attitude of Poland. He thought that Yugoslav and Roumanian help could be counted upon in the event of action by Hungary.'

On the subject of Russian aid General Gamelin said 'that one could not count on effective help from Russian land forces, even if Russia took the political decision to intervene, owing to the certain opposition of the Poles and the no less probable opposition of the Roumanians to the path of Russian troops, but on the other hand, he thought it likely that Roumania would let Russian aeroplanes pass on their way to Czechoslovakia (had in fact already done so); and in the case of an attack by Hungary against Czechoslovakia he thought that the Little Entente would hold together, and that Roumania would in her own interests put landing grounds in Transylvania at the disposal of the Soviet Air Force. In general he thought that the Russian Air Force was composed of good and numerous material, though their aircraft were not comparable to those of Germany.'

we may expect to be faced in a very short time with a *fait accompli*, so far as Czechoslovakia is concerned. No declarations or actions of France or ourselves in the meantime can prevent this sudden and overwhelming result whatever might be the other justification for or ultimate issues of a world war waged to vindicate our conceptions of just treatment.

3. Although we have always recognised this probability, the latest information requires us to face the actual facts. In this situation, having regard to the close identity of interests of our two countries, it is necessary that any action by France in discharge of her obligations and by ourselves in support of France should be closely concerted, especially as regards measures which would be likely immediately and automatically to start a world war without unhappily having any effect on saving Czechoslovakia.

4. We would be glad to know that French Government agree that any action of an offensive character taken by either of us henceforward (including declaration of war, which is also important from point of view of United States) shall only be taken after previous consultation and agreement.

5. This, of course, does not apply to precautionary measures of defence, such as mobilisation of our Navy, on which we have already decided, or French occupation of Maginot Line, which has already been effected.

#### No. 1144

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 27, 8.40 p.m.)

No. 545 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10883/1941/18]

BERLIN, September 27, 1938

Following is translation of letter from the Chancellor in reply to the Prime Minister's letter of September 26<sup>1</sup> which Herr Hitler would like included in the White Paper.<sup>2</sup>

Begins:

Berlin, September 27th, 1938.

Dear Mr. Chamberlain,

I have in the course of the conversations once more informed Sir Horace Wilson, who brought me your letter of September 26, of my final attitude. I should like however to make the following written reply to certain details in your letter:

The Government in Prague feels justified in maintaining that the proposals in my memorandum of September 23rd went far beyond the concession which it made to the British and French Governments and that the acceptance of the memorandum would rob Czechoslovakia of every guarantee for its national existence. This statement is based on the argument that Czechoslovakia is to give up a great part of her prepared defensive system before she

<sup>1</sup> No. 1097.

<sup>2</sup> The reference is to Cmd. 5847 of 1938.

can take steps elsewhere for her military protection. Thereby the political and economic independence of the country is automatically abolished. Moreover the exchange of population proposed by me would turn out in practice to be a panic-stricken flight.

I must openly declare that I cannot bring myself to understand these arguments or even admit that they can be regarded as seriously put forward. The Government in Prague simply passes over the fact that the actual arrangement for the final settlement of the Sudeten German problem, in accordance with my proposals, will be made dependent, not on a unilateral German petition<sup>3</sup> or on German measures of force, but rather, on the one hand, on a free vote under no outside influence and, on the other hand, to a very wide degree on German-Czech agreement on matters of detail to be reached subsequently. Not only the exact definition of the territories in which the plebiscite is to take place but the execution of the plebiscite and the delimitation of the frontier to be made on the basis of its result are in accordance with my proposals to be met independently of any unilateral decision by Germany. Moreover all other details are to be reserved for agreement on the part of a German-Czech commission.

In the light of this interpretation of my proposals and in the light of the cession of the Sudeten population areas, in fact agreed to by Czechoslovakia, the immediate occupation by German contingents demanded by me represents no more than a security measure which is intended to guarantee a quick and smooth achievement of the final settlement. This security measure is indispensable. If the German Government renounced it and left the whole further treatment of the problem to normal negotiations with Czechoslovakia, the present unbearable circumstances in the Sudeten German territories which I described in my speech yesterday would continue to exist for a period, the length of which cannot be foreseen. The Czechoslovak Government would be completely in a position to drag out the negotiations on any point they liked and thus to delay the final settlement. You will understand after everything that has passed that I cannot place such confidence in the assurances received from the Prague Government. The British Government also would surely not be in a position to dispose of this danger by any use of diplomatic pressure.

That Czechoslovakia should lose a part of her fortifications is naturally an unavoidable consequence of the cession of the Sudeten German territory agreed to by the Prague Government itself. If one were to wait for the entry into force of the final settlement in which Czechoslovakia had completed new fortifications in the territory which remained to her, it would doubtless last months and years. But this is the only object of all the Czech objections. Above all it is completely incorrect to maintain that Czechoslovakia in this manner would be crippled in her national existence or in her political and economic independence. It is clear from my memorandum that the German occupation would only extend to the given line and that the final delimitation of the frontier would take place in accordance with the procedure which

<sup>3</sup> A note on this text as finally received suggests the emendation 'decision'.



I have already described. The Prague Government has no right to doubt that the German military measures would stop within these limits. If nevertheless it desires such a doubt to be taken into account the British and if necessary also the French Government can guarantee the quick fulfilment of my proposal. I can moreover only refer to my speech yesterday in which I clearly declared that I regret the idea of any attack on Czechoslovak territory and that under the condition which I laid down I am even ready to give a formal guarantee for the remainder of Czechoslovakia.<sup>4</sup> There can therefore be not the slightest question whatsoever of a check to the independence of Czechoslovakia. It is equally erroneous to talk of an economic rift. It is on the contrary a well-known fact that Czechoslovakia after the cession of the Sudeten German territory would constitute a healthier and more unified economic organism than before.

If the Government in Prague finally evinces anxiety also in regard to the state of the Czech population in the territories to be occupied, I can only regard this with surprise. It can be sure that on the German side nothing whatever will occur which will preserve for those Czechs a similar fate to that which has befallen the Sudeten Germans consequent on the Czech measures.

In these circumstances I must assume that the Government in Prague is only using a proposal for the occupation by German troops in order, by distorting the meaning and object of my proposal, to mobilise those forces in other countries, in particular in England and France, from which they hope to receive unreserved support for their aim and thus to achieve the possibility of a general warlike conflagration. I must leave it to your judgement whether, in view of these facts, you consider that you should continue your effort, for which I should like to take this opportunity of once more sincerely thanking you, to spoil such manœuvres and bring the Government in Prague to reason at the very last hour.

<sup>4</sup> See No. 1126, note 2.

#### No. 1145

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 27, 9.0 p.m.)

No. 542 *Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10880/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 27, 1938

Czech Chargé d'Affaires came to see me this evening to ask if I could give him any information.

I told him I could in all honesty and regard for his small nation only tell him bitter facts that Herr Hitler had learned through us yesterday of Czech refusal of German plan and had replied that if this refusal were not modified before 2 p.m. September 28 he would regard it as definite and take action accordingly.

I presume this to mean general mobilisation and advance of German troops into Sudeten areas possibly even on following morning.

Chargé d'Affaires spoke of dying at least with honour.

I told him that I thought it was . . .<sup>1</sup> with honour and that nothing could be more honourable than for M. Benes to announce to the world that he preferred to yield to overwhelming force than . . .<sup>1</sup> a war which would ruin his own country and might ruin the whole of Europe.

I thought myself that M. Benes would go down to history as a far greater man if he did this than if he involved his country and perhaps the world in disaster.

However brutal and intolerable were German methods such a course was preferable to dying in order to prevent immediate occupation of territory which Czechoslovak Government had undertaken in any case to surrender within a few months' time.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.

#### No. 1146

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 28, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 317 Telegram [C 10919/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 27, 1938, 9.40 p.m.

My telegram No. 312.<sup>1</sup>

M. Louis Marin called on me just now (6 p.m.).

I asked for his reading of the situation. He declared definitely that great majority of French people will totally fail to understand why they should go to war for really not very vital difference between what we and the Czechs have agreed to give up and what Herr Hitler now demands. The great sacrifice was made by Czechoslovakia when she accepted Anglo-French proposals. To prevent such a sacrifice war would have been conceivable; now it would be unthinkable and the heart of the great majority of Frenchmen would not be in the game from the start. If France were attacked matters would be different, but for France to attack would be folly (M. Caillaux used this last phrase to me on September 25).

M. Marin feels that French preparations are very imperfect and many short-comings have been revealed, not only in the air. He believes, given a sensible internal policy with healthy examples of the fatal 40 hours week, these deficiencies can be made good in a relatively short time. To embark upon an aggressive war at once in spite of them would, he maintains, be lunacy. He has no illusions about the future German intentions but feels definitely that to try to *attack* Germany on a ground of her own choosing would be a psychological and a . . .<sup>2</sup> error.

M. Marin does not wish Parliament summoned here. The British Parliament is different and is mainly composed of well behaved people: here

<sup>1</sup> No. 1133.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

the communists would shout out insults against Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini.

M. Marin finally expressed to me his fervent hope that the British Prime Minister would continue his magnificent efforts to save our allied countries from catastrophe.

No. 1147

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 27)*<sup>1</sup>

*No. 760 Telegraphic: by wireless [C 10873/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 27, 1938

Following is a summary of a statement broadcast by the Czechoslovak wireless at 6 p.m. on September 26th as published today in the semi-official 'Prager Presse'. Herr Hitler's memorandum was communicated to the Czechoslovak Government on the night of September 24-5. The Czechoslovak Government received the memorandum on the assumption that it was based on the principles of the Franco-British plan, which had been agreed to at Berchtesgaden and had been accepted by the Czechoslovak Government in the belief that by the heavy sacrifices which it involved they would safeguard the future development of the Czechoslovak State and obtain international guarantees.

Further examination showed that the memorandum was not concerned with the application of the Franco-British plan but contained new proposals which went far beyond it, and applied new demands formulated not with a will to peace but in a brutal endeavour to destroy all possibility of existence for the Czechoslovak State. The memorandum ignored the question of possible guarantees, and departed from the basis of the Anglo-French proposal with regard to the areas to be transferred. The plan would involve the transfer of 2,823,247 Germans and 816,359 Czechs (on the basis of the 1930 census figures). As the number of Czechs inhabiting the predominantly German districts amounts to 38,200[?] the proposal meant the transfer of 434,000 Czechs living in Czech majority districts. In addition a plebiscite was demanded for further predominantly Czech areas the population of which consisted of 1,116,084 Czechs and 144,711 Germans; while 816,359 Czechs would be transferred to Germany only 102,980 Germans would remain in Bohemia.<sup>2</sup> Hitler has thus thrown off the mask and demanded districts which not only had never been German but were not even inhabited by Germans. Nor had he thought it necessary to mention the guarantees which would be given to the Czech minority in Germany having regard to the ruthless denationalisation policy now carried out in Germany. The objects of the Hitler memorandum could be seen from the economic consequences deriving from it. It was aimed at the very foundations of Czechoslovakia's economic existence, for she would be robbed of extensive areas of industrial and agricultural productivity and the integrity of Bohemia and of

<sup>1</sup> The hour of receipt of this telegram is not recorded.

<sup>2</sup> It appears uncertain whether these figures were correctly received.

the whole Republic would be destroyed from a communications and economic point of view. She would lose all her centres of industry except Prague, Zlin and Pilsen which would be immediately on her frontiers. She would lose all her hops, the greater part of her forests, her iron, cotton, glass, porcelain and chemical industries etc. Her export trade would be relined (*sic*)<sup>2</sup> and unemployment consequently increased at a time when she would have to provide for masses of fugitives from the new National Socialist régime. Again, her chief railways and roads would be cut, e.g. the communication between Prague and Northern and Southern Czechoslovakia and with South Eastern and Northern Moravia. The Republic would be cut into three parts and in a word completely crippled from a communications point of view. She would be equally crippled from a military point of view and left to the mercies of Germany, the more so as she would lose her war industry and most important fortifications, which in the situation envisaged could not be replaced. Unless the memorandum was drawn up in ignorance of the facts, the conclusion could only be drawn that it was designed to reduce Czechoslovakia to economic and political impotence and prepare the way for Germany's complete domination of central Europe. The Czechoslovak Government showed the best will for a solution of the Sudeten German problem by going to the furthest limits and accepted the Franco-British plan as a basis of agreement, nothing has been changed in this firm and determined will under the new Government. The Czechoslovak Government are convinced that a real agreement and the preservation of peace can still be attained provided that Great Britain and France stand by the proposals agreed at Berchtesgaden which were submitted to the Czechoslovak Government on September 19 and accepted by them.

Please repeat to Berlin.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

#### No. 1148

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 27, 11.23 p.m.)*  
*No. 767 Telegraphic: by wireless [C 10908/4786/18]*

PRAGUE, September 27, 1938

Berlin telegram No. 234 [*sic*].<sup>1</sup>

With reference to the opinion expressed by Colonel Mason-MacFarlane on the state of the morale of the Czech army, my Military Attaché understood his impression to be that the difference in the morale of the frontier-guard (not military) whom he first encountered and who were admittedly nervy and that of troops whom he encountered later was most marked. The latter made a good impression and displayed no lack of morale. Apart from this, however, my Military Attaché does not consider morale of Czech army is low. He considers that they have confidence in their cause, their leadership and their equipment. He thinks it not unlikely, if they have the moral

<sup>1</sup> This number is incorrect; the reference appears to be to No. 1113.

support of knowing that they possess powerful allies even if these cannot immediately act on their behalf, that they may render a good account of themselves. It is of course a matter upon which no definite assurance can be given one way or the other.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin by the Foreign Office.

**No. 1149**

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 27, 11.30 p.m.)*  
*No. 766 Telegraphic [C 10875/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 27, 1938

Your telegram No. 367.<sup>1</sup>

I delivered Prime Minister's message at a brief interview which was over by 6.55 p.m. September 27. President Benes said he would immediately convoke Government to take a decision. He presumed that the French Government were informed. The President added that his efforts to find a solution had been superhuman and that his conscience was clear. Mistakes might have been made but none which could justify such a penalty.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1136.

**No. 1150**

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 27, 11.55 p.m.)*  
*No. 318 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10869/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 27, 1938

Your telegram No. 342.<sup>1</sup>

Minister for Foreign Affairs tells me that the French Government are in entire agreement not to take any offensive measures without previous consultation with and agreement by us.

His Excellency feels more and more that it behoves us both to be extremely prudent and to count our probable and even possible enemies before embarking on any offensive act whatever.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1143.

**No. 1151**

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 28, 11.55 p.m.)*  
*No. 319 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10870/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 27, 1938

French Government believe that instructions sent to His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin in your telegram No. 428<sup>1</sup> will not be sufficiently far-reaching to satisfy the German Government.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1140.

The French Government will therefore wait till the French Ambassador at Berlin reports on the result of Sir N. Henderson's *démarche*. If this is unsuccessful they will suggest a further *démarche* by M. François-Poncet proposing a rather more extended German occupation.

Repeated to Berlin and Prague.

### No. 1152

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 28)*

*No. 624 Saving: Telegraphic [C 10871/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 27, 1938

I see from record of conversation<sup>1</sup> with French Ministers on September 25 (page 3<sup>2</sup>) that M. Daladier stated that Herr Hitler's memorandum of September 23 had only been received at 11.30 that morning. Facts are as follows:— Taking down of Godesberg telegram No. 9<sup>3</sup> to me by telephone from Foreign Office was completed at about 8.35 p.m. September 24. It was decyphered without delay and copies were ready for me to hand to M. Bonnet shortly after 10.0 p.m. He asked me by telephone, however, to send it, and a member of my staff handed it, with a personal letter from me to M. Bonnet, to one of the latter's secretaries at about 10.20 p.m. to be given to M. Bonnet immediately.

I assume, therefore, that M. Daladier must have meant either that the French translation was not in the hands of the Ministers until 11.30 a.m. on September 25, or that the map sent through French Embassy in London did not arrive until then.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1093.

<sup>2</sup> Page 522, above.

<sup>3</sup> No. 1068.

### No. 1153

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 28, 9.30 a.m.)*

*No. 770 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10876/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 27, 1938

Your telegram No. 369<sup>1</sup> to Prague and your telegram No. 428<sup>2</sup> to Berlin.

I acted accordingly at an interview with the Minister for Foreign Affairs which ended about 9.30 p.m. September 27. Dr. Krofta could not give me reply there and then but his own first impression of our proposal seemed to be favourable.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris by Foreign Office.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1138.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1140.

No. 1154

*Note from the French Ambassador to Viscount Halifax*<sup>1</sup>

[C 11033/1941/18]

ALBERT GATE HOUSE, le 27 septembre 1938

*Aide-Mémoire*

Sous réserve d'informations nouvelles, le discours prononcé hier par M. Hitler permet de tenir pour certain qu'au 1<sup>er</sup> octobre les troupes allemandes se mettront en marche.

Il convient de tenter un effort suprême pour empêcher ce geste.

Aucun sacrifice nouveau ne peut plus être demandé au Gouvernement tchèque sur le fond, sous peine de mettre en péril les intérêts vitaux du pays. Il semble cependant que Prague devrait pouvoir offrir, avant l'expiration du délai fixé par l'Allemagne, des évacuations partielles de territoire, accompagnées d'occupations correspondantes, la tranche complémentaire à évacuer après fixation de la nouvelle frontière restant à déterminer immédiatement suivant la méthode du plan franco-britannique.

Ainsi, le Gouvernement tchèque ne pourrait plus être accusé de manœuvres dilatoires, et l'amour-propre de M. Hitler serait sauvegardé.

En fait, le commandement tchèque doit envisager sans doute, pour des raisons stratégiques, certains replis dans des régions entièrement allemandes. Peut-être pourrait-on donc suggérer à Prague de faire dès maintenant, pour en retirer un bénéfice moral, l'opération sans doute nécessaire dans quatre jours pour des raisons militaires.

S'il partageait cette manière de voir, le Gouvernement tchèque déclarerait retirer dès maintenant ses forces et ses fonctionnaires de certaines zones que M. Hitler serait en mesure d'occuper dès le 1<sup>er</sup> octobre.

A la même date, la Commission Internationale serait constituée, de façon à envisager dès maintenant le début de ses travaux.

Le Gouvernement de la République attacherait du prix à savoir d'urgence si le Gouvernement britannique serait disposé à recommander, d'accord avec le Gouvernement français, une telle suggestion à l'examen du Gouvernement de Prague.

<sup>1</sup> This *aide-mémoire* was left at the Foreign Office on September 27 by the French Ambassador, who had a conversation with the Secretary of State. See No. 1137.

No. 1155

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received September 28, 1.45 a.m.)*

*No. 546 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10884/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 28, 1938

Your telegram No. 428.<sup>1</sup>

I communicated plan in letter to Minister for Foreign Affairs which I handed to State Secretary at 11 o'clock this evening<sup>2</sup> for transmission to

<sup>1</sup> No. 1140.

<sup>2</sup> This telegram was drafted on September 27.

Chancellor. Letter contained substance of numbered paragraphs of your telegram under reference. State Secretary took my letter direct to Chancery. He pointed out that whereas plan might have been put forward usefully two or even one week (? earlier)<sup>3</sup> it was now out of date and he did not believe Chancellor would or could take it into consideration. In his opinion only chance left was for Czechoslovak Government to accept German plan at once and to offer to discuss details for which plan affords (*sic*)<sup>4</sup> ample scope. I told State Secretary that nevertheless my urgent advice was that German Government should not take precipitate action and should give Czechoslovak Government yet another chance or in any case should take no action until after debate in House of Commons. State Secretary agreed personally in this latter respect.

When I mentioned that French Government concurred in plan State Secretary observed that French Ambassador had not visited Ministry of Foreign Affairs for over a fortnight and complained that he did nothing to help the situation.

While I realise that . . .<sup>3</sup> communication may be necessary for internal purposes, it is as practical proposal quite useless since there is not the slightest chance that Herr Hitler will accept it or even consider it. This fact was made abundantly plain at conversation this morning and is confirmed in Chancellor's letter to Prime Minister today.

Facts must be faced that issue is as stated in your telegram to Prague No. 367<sup>5</sup> and in my telegram to you No. 540.<sup>6</sup> Unless Czechs by tomorrow notify German Government that they are prepared to send representative here on basis of acceptance of memorandum the invasion of Czechoslovakia begins Thursday or very soon after. If a general conflict with all its dangers to us and its certain disaster to European civilisation is to be averted this can only be achieved by Czechoslovak acceptance of German memorandum. It is useless and fatuous of M. Bonnet (see Paris telegram No. 313<sup>7</sup>) to talk of our two countries being unprepared for such a conflict and at the same time to refuse to put necessary pressure on Czechoslovakia.

If in fact we are unprepared with consequent disaster to ourselves and failure to save Czechs from annihilation or to re-establish a Czechoslovak State after war, two half-hearted actions (*viz.* manning Maginot line for example and taking no active steps) on outbreak of German hostilities against Czechoslovakia. . . .<sup>3</sup> This course involves far greater losses with regard to prestige to ourselves and results in complete destruction of Czechoslovakia which will become like Abyssinia a further victim to pacifist [*sic*] enthusiasm. The only alternative is to compel Czechoslovakia to yield by informing her at once before mid-day September 28 categorically that if she does not do so we shall not support her.

It is quite idle and . . .<sup>3</sup> tragic to suppose that any compromise proposal or delaying tactics on our part will release us from having to choose between

<sup>3</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>4</sup> This word appears in the telegram as received.

<sup>5</sup> No. 1136.

<sup>6</sup> No. 1142.

<sup>7</sup> No. 1139.



these three courses. It is discouraging to have to repeat as I have been doing for the last four months that the facts must be faced . . .<sup>8</sup> and it is disastrous that M. Bonnet and others should delude themselves into thinking that compromise proposals will save us from this dilemma.

If His Majesty's Government reach conclusion that preventive war against Hitler and his ally Mussolini must be undertaken let us rather choose our own moment and grounds on which we shall fight instead of having these forced upon us by Herr Hitler and M. Benes.

Repeated to Prague and Paris.

<sup>8</sup> The text is here uncertain.

### No. 1156

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

*No. 346 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10883/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 28, 1938, 11.0 a.m.*

My telegram to Berlin No. 434<sup>1</sup> and my telegram to Rome No. 408.<sup>2</sup>  
Please inform French Government and enlist their support.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1158.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1159.

### No. 1157

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 28, 11.10 a.m.)*

*No. 547 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10911/1941/18]*

BERLIN, *September 28, 1938*

My telegram No. 546.<sup>1</sup>

French Ambassador telephoned at 8.0 a.m. to inform me that he had been instructed to support plan communicated by me last night through the Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Chancellor and to go further by agreeing to occupation of Egerland as a whole instead of up to Czech defences. I ventured to tell him that I was convinced that His Majesty's Government would accept this modification and that he might say so.

It is difficult to believe at this eleventh hour how Herr Hitler will prove either reasonable or amenable unless the Czechs themselves make an overture.

I would consequently most earnestly beg that immediate telephoned advice be given to M. Benes to get into direct touch with the German Government. There is no hope now in my opinion of a peaceful solution if he continues any longer to act through Western Powers. Last article of the German plan affords a sign of loophole for discussion. If therefore he was to announce that in order to preserve peace he accepts German plan and is ready to discuss details in accordance with that article and if necessary on the basis of new Franco-British plan there is still faint chance that war may be avoided.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1155.

But M. Benes should let this be known to the German Government before 2.0 p.m. today.

French Ambassador has asked to see Herr Hitler himself but the hour has not yet been fixed.

Repeated to Prague and Paris.

**No. 1158**

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 434 Telegraphic [C 10883/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 28, 1938, 11.30 a.m.

You should seek immediate interview with German Chancellor and deliver to him the following personal message from the Prime Minister:—

After reading your letter I feel certain that you can get all essentials without war and without delay.

I am ready to come to Berlin myself at once to discuss arrangements for transfer with you and representatives of Czech Government, together with representatives of France and Italy if you desire.

I feel convinced we could reach agreement in a week. However much you distrust Prague Government's intentions, you cannot doubt power of British and French Governments to see that promises are carried out fairly and fully and forthwith. As you know I have stated publicly that we are prepared to undertake that they shall be so carried out.

I cannot believe that you will take responsibility of starting a world war which may end civilisation for the sake of a few days' delay in settling this long standing problem.

Repeated to Paris, Washington, Prague and Rome.

**No. 1159**

*Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)*

*No. 408 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10883/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 28, 1938, 11.30 a.m.

You should immediately communicate the following personal message from the Prime Minister to the Duce:—

I have today addressed last appeal to Herr Hitler to abstain from force to settle Sudeten problem which I feel sure can be settled by a short discussion and will give him the essential territory, population and protection for both Sudetens and Czechs during transfer. I have offered myself to go at once to Berlin to discuss arrangements with German and Czech representatives and, if the Chancellor desires, representatives also of Italy and France.

I trust Your Excellency will inform German Chancellor that you are willing to be represented and urge him to agree to my proposal which will keep all our peoples out of war. I have already guaranteed that Czech

promises shall be carried out and feel confident full agreement could be reached in a week.

Repeated to Paris, Washington, Prague and Berlin.

### No. 1160

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 28, 11.40 a.m.)*

*No. 320 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10913/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 28, 1938

Following for Prime Minister.

You will have seen from my recent telegrams tenor of opinion of notable Frenchmen of quite different political shades on present position. That position has only become quite clear to the French public in the last hours and since publication of Sudeten areas map.

It is now my duty to repeat word for word my considered views, as reported in my telegram No. 292<sup>1</sup> of September 24.

Minister for Foreign Affairs assures me that M. Benes, through his Ministers in London and Paris, has been carrying on a regular campaign against yourself and French Government and working in with all the forces in favour of a 'preventive war'.

The only whole party that favours war now are the Communists. Even the Socialists are divided.

Representatives of 200 deputies are going to M. Daladier this morning and then to President of the Republic to protest against being led into war on a mere question of procedure.

France is prepared to march to the last man to defend herself if attacked but will not fight with any heart in a hopeless offensive war against Germany, for which she is not prepared.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1076.

### No. 1161

*The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 28, noon)*

*No. 618 Telegraphic [C 10916/1941/18]*

ROME, September 28, 1938

I acted on your telegram No. 407.<sup>1</sup>

Minister for Foreign Affairs immediately went to see Signor Mussolini and instructions have been sent by latter to Italian Ambassador in Berlin to see Herr von Ribbentrop at once and to say that while Italy will fulfil completely her pledges to stand by Germany yet in view of great importance of request made by His Majesty's Government to Signor Mussolini the latter hopes Herr Hitler will see his way to postpone action which the Chancellor has told Sir H. Wilson is to be taken at 2 p.m. today for at least 24 hours so as to allow Signor Mussolini time to re-examine situation and endeavour to

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. See No. 1125, note 2.

find a peaceful settlement. I shall be informed of the answer as soon as it arrives.

Full account of interview follows.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See No. 1192.

### No. 1162

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 28, 12.10 p.m.)

*No. 550 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10924/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 28, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

I telephoned at 10.30 a.m. this morning to Field-Marshal Göring and gave him brief idea of plan which I communicated to the Chancellor. I asked him for his good offices on obvious grounds.

Field-Marshal Göring, while stating that something must be done at once, told me he understood perfectly and that he would see Herr Hitler himself immediately.

I mentioned that the French Ambassador was seeking an interview and expressed the hope that this would be granted as soon as possible as French plan went further in some respects than the proposals of His Majesty's Government.

I then visited the French Ambassador who was informed while I was there that Herr Hitler would see him at 11.15 a.m. Since important point as to whether Czechoslovak Government accept the new plan or not is still uncertain I begged the Ambassador to make it plain to the Chancellor that Czech Government could not well refuse without forfeiting their claim to French support.

I have now asked for meeting myself with the Chancellor to communicate message in your telegram No. 434.<sup>2</sup>

Repeated to Prague and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> Owing to the number of telegrams dispatched in rapid succession, this reference is wrong. Telegram No. 549 refers to the possible closing of two vice-consulates. The reference appears to be to No. 1157.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1158.

### No. 1163

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 28, 12.24 p.m.)*

*No. 322 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10921/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 28, 1938

Your telegram No. 346.<sup>1</sup>

French Government promise to send immediate instructions *en clair* by telephone to their representatives at Berlin and Rome supporting action of His Majesty's Ambassadors in those capitals.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1156.

**No. 1164**

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 28, 12.40 p.m.)*  
*No. 323 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10922/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 28, 1938

My telegram No. 319.<sup>1</sup>

French Ambassador at Berlin had interview with Hitler at 11.15 this morning to make *démarche* foreshadowed in my telegram under reference.

French Ambassador in London will inform you of result as soon as possible directly after French Government hear it.

Repeated to Berlin and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1151.

**No. 1165**

*Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)*  
*No. 411 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 11030/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 28, 1938, 1.0 p.m.

My telegram No. 428<sup>1</sup> to Berlin.

Please communicate gist to Italian Government and urge them to use their influence with Herr Hitler in favour of plan's acceptance.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1140.

**No. 1166**

*The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 28, 1.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 621 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10917/1941/18]*

ROME, September 28, 1938

At Signor Mussolini's request Herr Hitler has accepted to postpone mobilisation for 24 hours.

**No. 1167**

*The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 28, 1.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 622 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10918/1941/18]*

ROME, September 28, 1938

Your telegram No. 408.<sup>1</sup>

Prime Minister's personal message to Signor Mussolini.

Signor Mussolini will support with Herr Hitler, and advise acceptance of proposals for a conference at Berlin and ask to be represented.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1159.

No. 1168

*The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 28, 2.20 p.m.)

No. 623 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10932/1941/18]

ROME, September 28, 1938

French Chargé d'Affaires has received instructions to support our initiative with Italian Government. In view of results of conversations between Count Ciano and myself this morning, I earnestly deprecate any such action and have told French Chargé d'Affaires so.

I have just received confidential telephone message from Minister for Foreign Affairs which I have passed on to French Chargé d'Affaires saying that such action of French Government might entirely change the situation not only as regards Italy but also as regards Germany.

I feel strongly that all your efforts may be frustrated if French insist on associating themselves with your initiative.

French Chargé d'Affaires understands the situation and is telephoning to M. Bonnet accordingly.

No. 1169

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*  
No. 436 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10911/1941/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 28, 1938, 2.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 547.<sup>1</sup>

Egerland may mean the small area around Eger or might be interpreted to cover a much wider area.

Please report immediately French Ambassador's interpretation of the phrase 'Egerland as a whole'.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1157.

No. 1170

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 28, 2.30 p.m.)*  
No. 773 Telegraphic: by wireless [C 10949/4786/18]

PRAGUE, September 28, 1938

Following for War Office.

Military Attaché reports that all details regarding Czech mobilisation and concentration are regarded as secret by General Staff. He has however been able to obtain following general information. Estimate previously given that something more than a million men are now under arms is substantially correct.

Mobilisation commenced officially at midnight on September 24-5 although first proclamation of intended mobilisation was made on September

23 at 10.15 p.m. Mobilisation is complete except for certain reserve formations. Concentration commenced yesterday and will continue for some days. Four armies have been constituted composed of the same army corps and divisions as in peace with addition of reserve divisions. Confidence is felt that if French take the offensive reasonably early German army cannot overrun Bohemia and Moravia. According to Czech General Staff mobilisation of thirty-seven divisions in Germany applies chiefly to taking of measures connected with transport, industrial mobilisation etc. and to formation of Landsturm divisions. It will technically bring Germany to parity with Czechoslovakia as regards preparation for war although in fact the bulk of the army has been mobilised for some time.

#### No. 1171

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 28, 2.35 p.m.)

No. 551 *Telegraphic: by telephone* [C 10933/1941/18]

BERLIN, September 28, 1938

Issue is still in the balance. I need not urge importance of appealing to House of Commons not to aggravate the situation by attacks on Herr Hitler and National Socialism.

#### No. 1172

*Note by Sir A. Cadogan*  
[C 11126/1941/18]

September 28, 1938

Sir Nevile Henderson rang me up soon after half-past two to say that he had been to see the Führer with the message from the Prime Minister. The Führer had told Sir Nevile that he was not in a position to give any definite answer as he is in discussion with the Italian Government and no final answer can be given until he has concerted with them. He hoped, however, to give a reply later in the day. He added that he had postponed mobilisation at the appeal of the Duce for 24 hours. With reference to the suggestion made by the Prime Minister this morning that he would be prepared to make another visit to Germany, the Führer does not think it likely that there will be any necessity for such a visit.

Sir N. Henderson gathered that the principal objection which the Führer felt for our time-table related to paragraph II,<sup>1</sup> where it was indicated that it might not be possible as early as October 10 for the Germans to enter the whole area as the Czech forces might not have been completely withdrawn. The Führer seemed to think that this was leaving a loophole for further Czech evasions. I said to Sir Nevile that he ought to make it plain that the time is really past for talking about Czech evasions. Under this plan the

<sup>1</sup> Evidently in error for paragraph III. See No. 1140.

Führer would be dealing with ourselves; we had given him a series of dates and it would be our responsibility to see that what we had promised should happen by those dates. It was for this reason that we had to give ourselves some elbow-room and not to promise what might prove in practice impossible. In any case he should take every opportunity of emphasizing that the Führer was now dealing with us.

Sir Neville said that he thought it was essential to obtain immediate Czech assent to our time-table, and I have given instructions for a telephone message to be sent to Prague urging an immediate reply in this sense.

Sir Neville urged that if our time-table were to be adopted there would be no time to lose, and we should have all our plans ready. For the British plenipotentiary he ventured to suggest Mr. Stanley Bruce.

Sir Neville, at the end of the conversation, said that he saw a glimmer of hope.

#### No. 1173

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 28, 2.40 p.m.)*

*No. 776 Telegraphic: by wireless [C 10960/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 28, 1938

Berlin telegram No. 537.<sup>1</sup>

German Minister's (? references)<sup>2</sup> to the President are of course tendentious. It is obvious that if Dr. Benes were now to vacate the Presidency after having been publicly reviled by Herr Hitler it would be a sign that his country is already losing its independence and even its self-esteem. Incidentally extortion of such a sign would be a powerful commentary on the worth of guarantee just offered by Herr Hitler to maintain the independence of Czechoslovakia.

Whether (? removal)<sup>2</sup> of President Benes would in fact induce Herr Hitler to call off the dogs of war is presumably questionable whereas his continuance in office is a guarantee of the execution of the Anglo-French proposals. Should Dr. Benes go I cannot predict who would take his place . . .<sup>2</sup> departure represents the acceptance of one further condition . . .<sup>2</sup> attached to Anglo-French proposals at the suggestion of His Majesty's Government his successor would presumably be in favour of peace at almost any price. On the other hand he might . . .<sup>3</sup>

Repeated to Paris. Foreign Office please repeat to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1134.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>3</sup> The rest of the sentence was indecipherable.

#### No. 1174

*Note by Sir A. Cadogan, September 28, 1938, 3.15 p.m.*

*[C 11126/1941/18]*

Sir Neville Henderson told me at 3.15 on the telephone that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs had just informed him that Herr Hitler invites the Prime



Minister to meet him at Munich tomorrow morning. He has also invited Signor Mussolini, who will arrive at 10 a.m., and M. Daladier.

Sir Nevile Henderson, in promising to transmit the message, warned the Führer that it would almost certainly not be possible for the Prime Minister to arrive before 12 or 12.30.

No. 1175

*United Kingdom Delegation (Geneva) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 28, 3.45 p.m.)

No. 47 L.N. Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10962/1941/18]

GENEVA, September 28, 1938

Following from Captain Wallace.

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

An appeal to the Council is, I understand, provided for in both Franco-Czechoslovak and Soviet-Czechoslovak treaties. If such an appeal is made, which it seems is at any rate likely in the case of Soviet Government, Council would presumably proceed under Article 17 while action by Council under this Article leading to establishment of an act of aggression would furnish most useful legal basis for any economic measures we might desire to take. It is in the view of both Mr. de Valera<sup>2</sup> and M. Avenol<sup>3</sup> extremely doubtful whether any such decision regarding aggression would be obtainable from the Council. They both think the smaller States, neighbours of Germany, represented on the Council such as Sweden, Belgium and Latvia would be most reluctant to take

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. In this telegram (No. 46 L.N.) Captain Wallace sent the first part of his reply to a telegram (No. 60 of September 27) from the Foreign Office requesting his observations on 'the possibility of obtaining any action by the Assembly which would be of assistance to us in the event of war. In the light of the discussions on League reform I [the Secretary of State] assume that there is no possibility of obtaining the application of Article 16, and, therefore, an attempt to invoke Article 17 would be futile; but any action by the Assembly, for instance, in the form of a resolution, which indicated, on the lines of our statement about Article 16 [on September 22], that the situation was not one to which the members of the League could be indifferent, would obviously be of great value to us, in contending that the Members were not entitled to adopt an attitude of pre-war neutrality, particularly in relation to such action as we may take with a view to bringing economic pressure to bear on Germany and the exercise of belligerent rights at sea. . . .' Captain Wallace was further asked (i) what were the possibilities of keeping the Assembly in session or, if necessary, only adjourned, since 'any action by the League, so long as any hope of peace remains, would presumably infuriate Germany and should therefore only be taken when any hope of a peaceful solution has had to be abandoned', and (ii) who might take the initiative in the Assembly. On the question of action by the Assembly, Captain Wallace reported that 'Mr. de Valera [President of the Assembly] will consider sponsoring resolution in the Assembly to-morrow somewhat on lines of President Roosevelt's latest message to Herr Hitler, provided he obtains priority and approval of Bureau of Assembly. Nordic Powers are, I understand, already considering some such resolution, and Mr. de Valera proposes getting in touch with them immediately.' Captain Wallace was subsequently informed that the Foreign Office concurred in this proposed action.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. De Valera was President of the Assembly of the League of Nations.

<sup>3</sup> Secretary-General of the League of Nations.

any decision which might expose them to German animosity either now or later. We are inclined to agree with this view. In any event action by the Council would come at a later stage and if present session has been adjourned Council can presumably be called rapidly to meet either in London or Paris or wherever else may prove most suitable.

In the meantime useful report on Article 16 of the Covenant has been submitted to 6th Committee including following passage:—

‘That recourse to war against a member of the League whether immediately affecting any other member of the League or not is a matter of concern to the whole League and could not be considered as one in regard to which members are entitled to adopt attitude of indifference and that should such a situation arise there would be consultation between them.’

M. Litvinov had announced his intention of voting against any report on Article 16 but we will make every effort to persuade him to reconsider the matter and will enlist the help of the French if necessary.

Drafting Committee of the Council is at present engaged on drawing up report on application of Article 17 to Sino-Japanese conflict. This also if eventually adopted by the Council might provide useful precedent.

#### No. 1176

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 28, 4.5 p.m.)<sup>1</sup>*  
*No. 327 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 11023/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 28, 1938

Your telegram to Rome No. 415.<sup>2</sup>

I have informed M. Bonnet of substance of above and urged him to instruct French Minister at Prague in sense of last paragraph thereof.

M. Bonnet will tell French Minister to concert with Mr. Newton in making desired communication to Czechoslovak Government.

<sup>1</sup> The time of receipt appears to be wrongly given on this telegram but it is impossible from the text in the Foreign Office archives to establish the correct time.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1179.

#### No. 1177

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 28, 4.15 p.m.)*  
*No. 324 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10961/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 28, 1938

Berlin telegram No. 547.<sup>1</sup>

Political Director at Ministry of Foreign Affairs states that there must have been a misunderstanding. French Ambassador in Berlin was instructed, if the *démarche* of His Majesty's Ambassador was unsuccessful, to approach German Government to support the main lines of the British proposal, but

<sup>1</sup> No. 1157.

to suggest in addition the occupation by German troops of a larger area. This area, however, was carefully drafted so as not to include Czech defences.

Following is exact line:—

1. A l'angle nord du quadrilatère, zone située au nord des fortifications tchécoslovaques comportant l'abandon à l'Allemagne des saillants de Rumburg [Rumburg] et de Friedland.

2. Zone située à l'ouest d'une ligne orientée au nord-nord-est-sud-sud-ouest partant d'un point de la frontière germano-tchécoslovaque située à l'est de Weipert laissant les fortifications tchèques à l'est et rejoignant la frontière actuelle sensiblement à l'ouest de Taus vers Klentsch.

3. Sur la face sud-ouest du quadrilatère une zone située au sud-ouest d'une ligne tracée en partant de la frontière actuelle vers Neuern et se dirigeant vers le sud-ouest de Budweis pour s'infléchir au sud et rejoindre l'ancienne frontière sensiblement sur le méridien de Ling [*sic*, ? Linz].

French Ambassador derived the impression from his interview with Hitler this morning that there was a slight hope.

Repeated to Berlin and Prague, No. 383, by Foreign Office.

#### No. 1178

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 28, 4.20 p.m.)*

*No. 777 Telegraphic [C 10959/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 28, 1938, 4.18 p.m.

My telegram No. 770.<sup>1</sup>

First Secretary made a personal enquiry at Ministry of Foreign Affairs this morning on my behalf as to whether Czech reply (or general indication of its sense) might be expected in time to reach you before Parliament meets today.

I have just learnt that this is unlikely but that reply will be given with least possible delay.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1153.

#### No. 1179

*Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)*

*No. 415 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10964/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 28, 1938, 5.0 p.m.

My telegram No. 408.<sup>1</sup>

His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin telephoned at 2.30 p.m. to-day to say that he had been to see Herr Hitler with the message from the Prime Minister. Herr Hitler had said that he could not give any definite answer as he was in discussion with the Italian Government. He hoped, however, to give a reply later in the day. He added that at the appeal of Signor Mussolini he had postponed mobilisation.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1159.

Sir N. Henderson gathered that Herr Hitler's principal objection to our time-table (see my telegram to Berlin No. 428<sup>2</sup>) relates to paragraph II,<sup>3</sup> where it was indicated that it might not be possible for the German troops to enter the whole area as early as October 10 because the Czech forces might not have been completely withdrawn. Herr Hitler seemed to think that this was leaving a loophole for further Czech evasions. Sir N. Henderson was informed that he ought to make it plain that the time was past for talking about Czech evasions. Under this plan Herr Hitler would be dealing with ourselves; we had given him a series of dates and it would be our responsibility to see that what we had promised should happen. It was for this reason that we had to give ourselves some elbow-room so as not to promise what might prove in practice impossible. In any case he should take every opportunity of emphasizing that Herr Hitler was now dealing with us.

Sir N. Henderson said that he thought it was essential to obtain immediate Czech assent to our time-table, and instructions have been sent to Prague urging an immediate reply in this sense.

Repeated to Prague and Paris (by telephone).

<sup>2</sup> No. 1140.

<sup>3</sup> Evidently in error for paragraph III. See No. 1140.

#### No. 1180

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 28, 6.0 p.m.)

*No. 552 Telegraphic (Part I)<sup>1</sup>: by telephone [C 10964/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 28, 1938

Your telegram No. 434.<sup>2</sup>

I communicated Prime Minister's message together with the German translation to Herr Hitler about 12.30 this afternoon. Chancellor began by telling me that he had postponed general mobilisation for twenty-four hours (i.e. till 2 p.m. tomorrow September 29) at the request of Signor Mussolini. He was going, he said, to discuss question further by telephone with the latter and until after consultation with him said he would give me no definite reply either as regards Prime Minister's offer to come to Germany (though he scarcely considered that such another trying journey would be necessary) or as regards the latest plan which I had submitted to him at length.

I would mention parenthetically that Field-Marshal Göring and Baron von Neurath were with the Chancellor when I came into the room but left immediately, Herr von Ribbentrop alone remaining. Just before going in General Bodenschatz came up to me and said in my ear that 'things are a little easier but speak your mind'.

I did so during my conversation appealing to Herr Hitler's humanity, the intensity of feeling in England, the difficulty of the Prime Minister's task and pertinacity of British race if dragged into a war etc.

Repeated to Paris, Prague and Rome.

<sup>1</sup> It will be seen that the three parts of this telegram were transmitted, or decyphered, in reverse order.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1158.

No. 1181

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 28, 5.45 p.m.)

*No. 552 Telegraphic (Part II): by telephone [C 10965/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 28, 1938

Herr Hitler did not seem to have studied very carefully latest British plan but passage to which he appeared superficially to object was sentence in third paragraph from 'that might not be possible' to the end of that sentence. His attitude was 'was the whole German army to be held up at dictation of some minor Czech military officer who might say he would not withdraw his troops fast enough?' I pointed out that there would also be British plenipotentiary who would see that there was no unnecessary delay. He was however unreasonable and kept reverting to this. His first suggestion was that if we would guarantee that whole area should be evacuated by Czech troops by October 10 he would be prepared to agree to that. But he declined to allow me to regard this suggestion as definite until after he had consulted his ally, Signor Mussolini.

Herr Hitler also said that areas marked in French map<sup>1</sup> would not do; they were impractical from military point of view etc. French Ambassador had, he said, given him to understand that modification might be possible in that respect.

Herr Hitler asserted that it was not prestige which he sought but principle. Czechs had undertaken to cede these areas: let them execute their undertaking. The truth was that Czechs were seeking world war in order to save themselves from ceding anything. I referred to your assurance of British responsibility. Herr Hitler would not believe Czechs would yield in any case. I told him that personally I believed they would.

Herr Hitler then asked me if Czech Government had accepted our latest plan. I said I had not yet heard. He then said that he would believe nothing and would order mobilization tomorrow if before 2 o'clock Czech Government had not agreed to accept in principle German plan and to send representative to discuss details in accordance with last article of that plan.

<sup>1</sup> No copy of this map appears to have been received in the Foreign Office. See No. 1177.

No. 1182

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 28, 5.20 p.m.)

*No. 552 Telegraphic (Part III): by telephone [C 10966/1941/18]*

BERLIN, September 28, 1938

Conversation lasted for some time but was interrupted for quarter of an hour in the middle when Chancellor had other business to attend to and I

was left with Herr von Ribbentrop. Latter was as usual very unhelpful especially in presence of (? his colleagues)<sup>1</sup>, trying to impress the Führer.

Generally speaking I derived slightly better impression. But it is essential that definite dates be fixed for which we must hold ourselves responsible, and above all definite acceptance by Prague beyond all shadow of doubt. If M. Benes can be induced to notify German Government direct that in the interests of world peace he accepts German plan in principle subject to discussion of details as foreshadowed in that plan, peace could still be ensured and end be the same as that already accepted by Czechoslovak Government.

Fact is that there will never be peace in Central Europe until the Czechs or Czechoslovak State is [*sic*] reduced to Czechs and Slovaks and does not govern completely alien and hostile races.

That is the issue and if Czechs do not accept it, then even an independent Czech State may cease to exist.

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.

#### No. 1183

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 28, 5.45 p.m.)*

*No. 325 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10963/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 28, 1938

M. Daladier will leave for Munich tomorrow morning with M. Léger and his Private Secretary. Will telegraph time of departure later.

#### No. 1184

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 384 Telegraphic<sup>1</sup> [C 11134/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 28, 1938, 6.45 p.m.

Herr Hitler this afternoon invited Signor Mussolini, M. Daladier and myself to meet him in Munich tomorrow.

I have accepted and so, I am informed, have the others.

Please immediately inform Dr. Benes and assure him that I shall have the interests of Czechoslovakia fully in mind and that I go there with the intention of trying to find accommodation between position of German and Czechoslovak Governments by which arrangement may be made for an orderly and equitable application of the principle of cession to which he has already agreed.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> It would appear that this telegram should have begun with the words: 'Following from Prime Minister.'

No. 1185

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 28, 6.45 p.m.)*  
*No. 326 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 11022/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 28, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

M. Bonnet promises to give me written account of M. François-Poncet's conversation with Herr Hitler<sup>2</sup> this morning. Chief preoccupation of Herr Hitler seems to have been concerning the 220,000 Sudeten refugees. M. Bonnet and General Gamelin are meeting shortly to produce a plan for occupation of certain Sudeten areas by German troops and perhaps suggested occupation of others by French, British and possibly Italian troops. They will also discuss plan for M. Daladier to take with him tomorrow for international observers to remain in plebiscite areas, etc.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1183.

<sup>2</sup> See No. 1199.

No. 1186

*The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 28, 8.40 p.m.)*  
*No. 624 Telegraphic [C 11016/1941/18]*

ROME, September 28, 1938, 7.0 p.m.

My telegram No. 618.<sup>1</sup>

In speaking of Italian participation on side of Germany if war broke out Count Ciano remarked that Italy's interests, honour and pledged word required that she should side actively and fully with Germany.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1161.

No. 1187

*The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 28, 10.15 p.m.)*  
*No. 625 Telegraphic [C 11017/1941/18]*

ROME, September 28, 1938, 7.10 p.m.

Your telegram No. 408.<sup>1</sup>

I took at once to the Minister for Foreign Affairs the Prime Minister's personal message to Mussolini. I also gave him message Prime Minister had sent to Hitler. After Count Ciano had read the former he expressed the utmost appreciation of Mr. Chamberlain's endeavours and said he would go and see Mussolini immediately.

I said I thought that the Prime Minister would wish me to communicate the message personally but in view of the urgency of the matter I would leave the decision to him for the moment. Count Ciano hesitated and then observed that if I were to see Mussolini the latter would be unlikely to be able to give me an immediate decision and any delay must be avoided. As Count

<sup>1</sup> No. 1159.

Ciano was clearly opposed to a joint interview at present and as I was convinced he would himself do all he can in favour of peace I abstained from pressing the point further. He therefore went to the Palazzo Venezia and I waited for his return.

**No. 1188**

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 385 Telegraphic: by wireless [C 11030/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 28, 1938, 8.0 p.m.*

It is essential that Czechoslovak Government should at once indicate their acceptance in principle of our plan and time-table. (My telegram to Berlin No. 428<sup>1</sup>.) Please endeavour to obtain this without delay, and when obtained inform Berlin by quickest means.

Czechoslovak Government should also be advised to have suitable representative, authorised to speak on their behalf, available to go to Munich at short notice tomorrow.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1140.

**No. 1189**

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 28, 8.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 557 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 11029/1941/18]*

BERLIN, *September 28, 1938*

According to French Ambassador's account his interview followed roughly the same lines as mine and he found Herr von Ribbentrop a thorn in his side. Chancellor said he would give him a reply in writing later.

During the conversation Chancellor was called away to telephone to Signor Mussolini. After he returned his attitude was noticeably more conciliatory.

French Ambassador has urged that M. Daladier should go to Munich. M. Bonnet replied that he believed proposal had emanated from Mr. Chamberlain.

Repeated to Prague, Paris and Rome.

**No. 1190**

*The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 28, 8.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 627 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 11018/1941/18]*

ROME, *September 28, 1938*

Italian Government state that Signor Mussolini has accepted Herr Hitler's invitation to meeting at Munich tomorrow.



No. 1191

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*  
*No. 352 Telegraphic [C 10756/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 28, 1938, 8.20 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 622 Saving.<sup>1</sup>

As you will now have seen from my telegram No. 342<sup>2</sup> His Majesty's Government consider it necessary that any action that the French Government may take to discharge their obligations and that they themselves may take in support of France should be closely concerted, and feel that no action of an offensive character should be taken by either Government without previous consultation and agreement.

From your telegram No. 318<sup>3</sup> I was glad to learn that the French Government share the views of His Majesty's Government in this respect.

M. Bonnet will appreciate bearing that this necessarily has on actual questions he has put to His Majesty's Government. But, as things stand today, you can answer questions as follows: (1) Refer him to the announcement published on September 27 authorising the calling up of defensive units of the auxiliary air force and this morning's announcement that it has been decided to mobilise the fleet as a purely precautionary measure. As regards (2) you should refer M. Bonnet to the statement which I made at the first meeting with the French Ministers on April 28 on the character of the participation of His Majesty's Government in a war arising out of their obligations to France under the Treaty of Locarno, and to the discussion which followed at the second meeting. As regards (3) you should explain that this proposal raises constitutional issues on which a decision could only be taken after the sanction of Parliament had been secured.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1120.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1143.

<sup>3</sup> No. 1150.

No. 1192

*The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received September 28, 11.15 p.m.)*  
*No. 620 Telegraphic [C 11055/1941/18]*

ROME, *September 28, 1938, 8.55 p.m.*

My telegram No. 618.<sup>1</sup>

Following is full account of interview.

I said to Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs that he had no doubt seen declaration made by the Prime Minister after German Chancellor's speech. I was instructed to hand over to him extract from that declaration and to express the earnest hope of His Majesty's Government that Signor Mussolini would see his way to exercise his influence with Herr Hitler to persuade him to accept undertaking given by the Prime Minister.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1161.

I said that was the end of my instructions but that I felt perhaps Signor Mussolini was the only man who could now induce Herr Hitler to accept a pacific solution. What would be result of war? One thing alone. I felt that unless Herr Hitler accepted the Prime Minister's proposal a European war was inevitable. The Minister for Foreign Affairs interrupted 'a world war'. But he said 'what do you and the French intend to do? Herr Hitler will not attack you. He will occupy Sudeten territory and then wait with folded arms. Will France and England attack Germany?' I said I was convinced there would be a war between France and Germany; that clearly meant hostilities and we should assuredly be unable to keep out. The Minister for Foreign Affairs remarked that 'but you do not wish to fight in alliance with Russia'. I replied that we did not want war at all, but if it came Russia was bound by treaty to Czechoslovakia. Count Ciano turned to me and asked whether my *démarche* constituted an official step by the British Government to ask Signor Mussolini to persuade Herr Hitler to accept Mr. Chamberlain's undertaking. I answered that it did. 'Then', he said, 'there is *no time* to be lost; it is a question of hours not days. Herr Hitler had given until October 1 for handing over of all Sudeten territories but he reserved the right of immediate action if necessary.'

I gathered the Minister for Foreign Affairs knew that Germany intended to mobilize and even to attack today. He then said that to show his good will he would *at once* go to see Signor Mussolini which he did leaving me to await his return.

### No. 1193

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 28, 10.0 p.m.)

No. 536 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 11028/1941/18]

BERLIN, September 28, 1938

Your telegram No. 436.<sup>1</sup>

French proposal for German military occupation covers following areas:

1. The Rumburg and Friedland salients.
2. A zone up to a line from a point east of Weipert to a point between Taus and Klentsch.
3. A zone bounded by a line from existing frontier towards Neuern running south-west of Budweis rejoining frontier north of Linz.

Line could be traced later on in greater detail. Any fortifications contained therein to remain in Czech hands.

(Last proviso would appear to me to diminish whole value of offer and be quite impracticable.)

<sup>1</sup> No. 1169.

No. 1194

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 28, 11.15 p.m.)*  
*No. 784 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 10999/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 28, 1938

The President telephoned me at 7.30 p.m. and said that he had heard there was to be a Conference of four Powers at Munich tomorrow. He accordingly asked me to convey following personal message from himself to Mr. Chamberlain:

'I beg Mr. Chamberlain to do nothing at Munich which could put Czechoslovakia in a worse situation than under Anglo-French proposals. I trust in promise made in those proposals and am very anxious as to how situation may develop. We are determined to put proposals into force, honestly and without useless delay, but we must have time and help from the Powers.

'Poland is now beginning to deliver threats and has given a kind of ultimatum to take effect by next Friday.<sup>1</sup> The people will be driven to desperation by such treatment. I ask Mr. Chamberlain very earnestly for help because it is our real desire to contribute to peace. I beg therefore that nothing may be done in Munich without Czechoslovakia being heard. It is a most terrible thing for her if negotiations take place without her being given an opportunity to state her (? case).<sup>2</sup> If no such opportunity is given it will not be . . .<sup>2</sup> for her to get political parties to accept what is done.'

<sup>1</sup> The documents dealing with the attitude of His Majesty's Government towards the Polish and Hungarian claims upon Czechoslovak territory will be printed in Volume III of this Series.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

No. 1195

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 28, 11.30 p.m.)*  
*No. 786 Telegraphic [C 11025/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 28, 1938

My telegram No. 784.<sup>1</sup>

When M. Benes had concluded this message I impressed upon him the urgency of a very early reply, for which I have indeed been pressing all day, to British plan. Your telegram No. 369.<sup>2</sup> I said I felt convinced that it was a matter of vital importance that a favourable answer should be delivered.

M. Benes said that Minister for Foreign Affairs was now in process of the drafting of reply as a result of discussions which had just been concluded. The Czechoslovak Government felt that in certain respects plan went beyond Anglo-French proposals and reply would therefore be likely to contain certain qualifications.

I begged most earnestly that if in any point Czechoslovak Government found plan unacceptable concrete alternations [*sic*] should be put forward,

<sup>1</sup> No. 1194.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1138.

with definite times and dates. Any vagueness would create worst impression and perhaps prejudice reception of message he had just asked me to convey to Mr. Chamberlain.

**No. 1196**

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 28, 11.20 p.m.)*  
*No. 787 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 11026/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 28, 1938

Your telegram No. 385<sup>1</sup> and my telegram No. 786.<sup>2</sup>  
10.40 p.m. September 28.

I have again spoken over the telephone with the President who after consultation with his Ministry of Foreign Affairs authorised me to reply as follows:

'Czechoslovak Government accepts in principle plan and time-table. But in both there are some points which are not in conformity with Anglo-French proposals. These cannot therefore be accepted, but other arrangements can be made to secure realization of plan.'

The Czechoslovak reply itself will not be ready before early hours of September 29 when it will be transmitted to you immediately and also to Sir N. Henderson direct if practicable.

I have given (? notice)<sup>3</sup> that a Czechoslovak representative should be available to go to Munich.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1188.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1195.

<sup>3</sup> The text is here uncertain.

**No. 1197**

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 29)*  
*No. 632 Saving: Telegraphic [C 11019/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 28, 1938

My telegram No. 320.<sup>1</sup>

M. Daladier received this morning M. Chichéry, President of the Socialist Radical group of the Chamber, with two other deputies, in the name of their party, who asked him to continue his courageous efforts in favour of peace. M. Chichéry subsequently declared that M. Daladier was completely informed of the feelings of Parliament and of the country; and that he would know how to interpret them in the best interests of France, even, if necessary, by the appropriate measures.

M. Daladier's Chef de Cabinet received on his behalf representatives of the Parliamentary group of the Socialist party, and of the Union Socialiste et Républicaine. These, it was announced, asked that everything should be

<sup>1</sup> No. 1160.

done to safeguard peace, and that measures should be taken to prevent the spreading of false news which might cause confusion and doubt in the country.

Later representatives of the minority groups of the Right, headed by M. Louis Marin, visited M. Daladier, and were afterwards received by the President of the Republic. The delegation, it was stated, urged him not to order general mobilisation or equivalent measures, or to take any step engaging the future of the country, without consulting Parliament. M. Daladier replied that it was a prerogative of the Government, which he could not renounce, to declare a general mobilisation, but that it was possible that he would not do so without consulting Parliament. The group later met the deputies whom they represented, and issued a statement warning the population against false and alarmist statements and declaring that they considered it impossible that a question settled in principle should lead to war over the methods of execution.

'Le Temps' publishes this evening a strong letter of protest from the President of the Paris and Seine group of the Association of War Wounded against the omission in the French broadcast of the Prime Minister's speech yesterday of the words 'These are only precautionary measures such as a Government must take in times like this. But they do not necessarily mean that we have determined on war or that war is imminent.' The writer declares that such dishonest omissions, which cannot be the result of chance, show that mistakes are at present made with a criminal object.

I received the visit today of several deputies and of M. Léon Bailby, proprietor of the 'Jour-Écho de Paris' who impressed upon me their repugnance for a war over the present issue and their indignation at the really criminal and Bolshevik attempts to render a general conflagration inevitable.

#### No. 1198

*The Czechoslovak Minister to Mr. Harvey<sup>1</sup> (Received September 29)*

*[C 11127/1941/18]*

CZECHOSLOVAK LEGATION,  
9 GROSVENOR PLACE, S.W.1.  
*September 28, 1938*

My dear Harvey,

This is the message which I gave to you over the phone<sup>2</sup> and which you were good enough to promise to transmit to the Secretary of State:

'In view of the fact that most important issues regarding Czechoslovakia are going to be discussed at the Munich conference, Mr. Benes hopes that it will be possible for a representative of Czechoslovakia to be at hand to

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Harvey was Private Secretary to the Secretary of State.

<sup>2</sup> This message from President Benes to the Prime Minister was telephoned by M. Masaryk at 7.30 p.m. on September 28. Mr. Harvey minuted: 'I communicated this message at once to No. 10 where the Secretary of State was with the Prime Minister. I was subsequently authorized to inform M. Masaryk that the Prime Minister would bear this point in mind and that he had already sent a message to President Benes.'

plead the Czechoslovak cause and supply the statesmen there assembled with any information they may require on the actual situation arising out of the Anglo-French plan, to which my Government agreed, and Herr Hitler's plan.

'Mr. Benes calls the Prime Minister's attention to the statement sent by me to the Secretary of State and published in the White Book<sup>3</sup> today as an answer to the question whether Czechoslovakia would be ready to take part in an international conference.'

With many thanks,  
Yours very sincerely,  
JAN MASARYK

<sup>3</sup> Cmd. 5847 of 1938.

### No. 1199

*Note from M. Bonnet to Sir E. Phipps (Received September 29)<sup>1</sup>*

[C 11041/1941/18]

M. François-Poncet m'a rendu compte au téléphone à midi 45 de l'entrevue qu'il a eue ce matin avec le Chancelier Hitler.

2. La conversation a été cordiale, elle a duré une heure environ. Le point qui préoccupe essentiellement le Chancelier est la situation des populations allemandes des Sudètes. Il a parlé avec émotion des 214,000 réfugiés qui sont venus dans un état de misère épouvantable sur le territoire du Reich. Il a montré un courrier extrêmement important des plaintes qui lui sont adressées par les Allemands des Sudètes.

3. M. François-Poncet rappelle que les journaux allemands sont remplis de ces protestations.

4. M. Poncet ayant suggéré qu'une force franco-britannique pourrait peut-être tout de suite occuper ces territoires et empêcher toute brimade, il lui est apparu que cette suggestion n'était pas repoussée. En ce qui concerne la proposition française elle-même, le Chancelier lui a fait remarquer qu'en ce qui concerne l'occupation du territoire, la proposition lui accordait peu de chose.

5. Il a paru à M. François-Poncet que M. Hitler était mal impressionné par le défaut de précision du projet et avait le sentiment que, par suite de la réoccupation par les Tchèques des régions sudètes qu'ils avaient auparavant abandonnées, l'opinion publique allemande estimerait que tout risquait d'être remis en question.

6. M. Poncet oppose aux arguments du Chancelier les nôtres, mais chacun restant sur ses positions. Néanmoins, il a semblé à M. Poncet que le Chancelier était ébranlé par l'argumentation qu'il lui avait fournie, à savoir qu'il y avait entre les demandes allemandes et les propositions franco-anglaises un moyen de transaction. Lorsque M. Poncet a demandé à M. Hitler: 'Alors

<sup>1</sup> This note was communicated by M. Bonnet to Sir E. Phipps on September 28 and transmitted to the Foreign Office by the latter under cover of despatch No. 1102.

je dois faire à mon Gouvernement une réponse négative?' M. Hitler a répondu: 'Je ne puis répondre non, mais je ne puis répondre maintenant. Je répondrai dans l'après-midi par une note écrite.'

7. M. Poncet résume sa conversation ainsi:

(1) Il a trouvé Hitler calme et raisonnant très froidement.

(2) Il lui semble que l'affaire a été mal engagée et dans des conditions imprécises et que s'il était possible d'avoir des propositions plus précises et de répondre en particulier à l'objection essentielle faite par Hitler au sujet de la protection des Sudètes il ne serait pas impossible d'arriver à un accord.

(3) Pendant la conversation M. Hitler a été appelé au téléphone par M. Mussolini. Il semble que M. Mussolini ait conseillé le calme à M. Hitler.

8. C'est sur l'initiative prise cette nuit par la France que le Gouvernement britannique avait demandé ce matin une intervention à M. Mussolini.

9. Aussitôt après que M. François-Poncet a quitté M. Hitler, l'Ambassadeur de Grande-Bretagne a été introduit porteur d'un message personnel du Premier Ministre anglais.

#### No. 1200

*Record of conversation between the Earl of Perth (Rome) and the American Ambassador in Rome (Received October 5)<sup>1</sup>*

[C 11555/1941/18]

ROME, September 28, 1938

The American Ambassador came to see me this evening and told me he had had an interview with Count Ciano and Signor Mussolini in order to deliver to the latter a copy of a second message which the President of the United States had addressed to Herr Hitler, and, I gathered, some special message to the Duce.

He said that Signor Mussolini had described to him very dramatically the events of this morning. The Duce had observed that the British Ambassador had seen Count Ciano at about half-past ten; Count Ciano had at once come to see him. He had only had some two hours therefore to get into telephonic communication with the Italian Ambassador in Berlin to arrange for the latter to see Hitler and for Hitler to stop the movement of the whole of the German Army which was destined to take place at two o'clock today. He had, however, succeeded in achieving all this. The Ambassador added that both Signor Mussolini and Count Ciano seemed immensely relieved at the turn which events had taken.

P.

<sup>1</sup> This record was transmitted under cover of a letter from the Earl of Perth to Viscount Halifax, dated September 29.

No. 1201

*The Czechoslovak Minister to Viscount Halifax (Received September 29)*  
[C 11001/1941/18]

CZECHOSLOVAK LEGATION,

8 GROSVENOR PLACE, S.W. 1.

September 28, 1938

Sir,

I have just received the following despatch from my Government:

'The French Ambassador in Berlin told us that the German Government have given to His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin the text of telephone conversations<sup>1</sup> which were supposed to have taken place between President Benes, Mr. Masaryk and Mr. Osusky. According to this, President Benes was supposed to have said to Mr. Masaryk that he is not ready to carry out the Anglo-French plan, and Mr. Masaryk supposedly reported to Mr. Benes about his negotiations with the Opposition in London to overthrow Mr. Chamberlain's Government. This assertion is an absolute untruth and typical of the method used by the German Government in these very serious times in order to push on to others the responsibility for deeds that they may be planning. Notify His Majesty's Government at once.

'(Signed) Krofta.'

May I add for my person that the accusation levelled against me is absolutely and utterly untrue.

I have, &c.,

JAN MASARYK

<sup>1</sup> See No. 1118, note 3.

No. 1202

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 30)*

No. 1099 [C 11213/4786/18]

PARIS, September 28, 1938

His Majesty's Ambassador at Paris presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and has the honour to transmit to him the under-mentioned document.

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 1202

PARIS, September 28, 1938

*The Ambassador.*

This morning I had an interview with Colonel Petitbon, and I asked him for an appreciation of the value of the Czech Army and its capacity for resistance if the Germans invaded Czechoslovakia. He told me that the Czechs



had already mobilised and concentrated 20 divisions, and that another 13 would be ready by Saturday. The Czech Military Attaché had told the French that the Czechs were mobilising 40 divisions in all, but Colonel Petitbon did not believe this, and considered 33 to 34 the limit. He said that they were well equipped, and that the French had always considered them well trained and efficient in every way. He did not think that the Germans would succeed in overrunning the country without hard fighting and great losses, nor did he think that it would be done very quickly. In reply to a question, he said that the French had always considered the Czechs' morale to be good, but he would take the opinion of the 2<sup>e</sup> Bureau on this point. Naturally, if Poland joined Germany in the attack on Czechoslovakia, the morale of the country would be liable to suffer. Incidentally on this question of morale, I myself saw Colonel Gauché, the Head of the 2<sup>e</sup> Bureau, a day or two ago, and he then stated most categorically that the morale of the Czech Army in his opinion was high. Colonel Petitbon went on to say that the number of divisions which the Germans could eventually mobilise was 120, that of these certainly 40 would be required for the operations in Czechoslovakia, 20 might be required to watch Poland, and if 10 were retained as a general reserve, 50 would be left to be employed on the French front.

I have recorded this conversation for Y.E. as it does not at all agree with the appreciation of the capacity of Czechoslovakia for resistance reported by the Foreign Office as having been given by General Gamelin to the Prime Minister in London,<sup>1</sup> and I would emphasise that Colonel Petitbon is General Gamelin's most confidential Staff Officer, and that his opinions are certainly those of his chief.

W. FRASER  
Colonel, Military Attaché.

<sup>1</sup> See No. 1143.

## No. 1203

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 29, 4.45 a.m.)*  
*No. 788 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 11027/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 29, 1938

Following is summary in translation of Czechoslovak Government's reply, received at 3.45 a.m.

Begins:—<sup>1</sup>

Czechoslovak Government have accepted Anglo-French proposals and agree that British and French Governments should guarantee their execution.

Czechoslovak Government accept in principle plan and time-table

<sup>1</sup> This telegram is printed as it was received. For corrections to this text, received by telephone at 12.16 p.m. on September 29, see No. 1207. A full emended version of the telegram was received, but the time of receipt (which appears to have been later than No. 1207) is not given. The translation of the complete text of the reply was sent in the evening of September 29 but was not decyphered until the following morning. The emendations suggested in notes 3, 5, and 7 are editorial and do not appear in No. 1207.

presented by His Majesty's Government but point out that of<sup>2</sup> some points time-table is not in conformity with Anglo-French proposals. They accept whole of point two except provision regarding composition of Committee of representatives and of boundary commission and except point (a) as<sup>3</sup> regards composition of Commission they suggest adding a French member and that permanent inability . . .<sup>4</sup> reach<sup>5</sup> questions in dispute should be submitted to arbitration of a representative of United States. Czechoslovak Government also accept whole of points four and five.

As regards points one and three they formulate following objections.

Anglo-French proposals fixed the nationals special date for the premeditation,<sup>6</sup> and Czechoslovak Government interpreted them to mean that the evacuation would only take place when competent international commission had finished the whole of its work.

Further in the opinion of Czechoslovak Government British plan of September 27 differs in two fundamentals from Anglo-French proposals namely:

i. It demanded the immediate evacuation of Asch and Eger.

ii. It demanded a progressive evacuation starting October 10; in both cases agreement has been reached on conditions of transfer by an international body which would include a Czechoslovak representative in accordance with Anglo-French proposals.

Czechoslovak Government cannot evacuate her territory nor demobilise nor abandon her fortifications until next<sup>7</sup> frontiers have been precisely fixed and until new system of international guarantees promised in Anglo-French proposals has been settled and assured. This procedure could be accelerated as Czechoslovak Government have no wish to retard a final solution.

Czechoslovak Government would accept any date for final evacuation if work of committee of plenipotentiaries and of Boundary Commission and agreement . . .<sup>8</sup> or later. At the same time they would agree to a date to mark the final limit and suggest December 15. It might be made earlier if work were completed, i.e. any date between October 31 and December 15.<sup>9</sup>

Czechoslovak Government demand that before work of plenipotentiaries and Boundary Commission begins, the principles and facts on basis of which new frontier is to be fixed . . .<sup>10</sup> settled by diplomatic negotiation. Anglo-French proposals lay down principle that districts with more than fifty

<sup>2</sup> In the full emended version this word reads 'on'.

<sup>3</sup> These words should read 'accept point (a). As . . .'.

<sup>4</sup> In the full emended version the missing word is 'to'.

<sup>5</sup> The words 'agreement on' appear to have been omitted.

<sup>6</sup> In the full emended version these words read 'fixed no special date for the evacuation'.

<sup>7</sup> This word should probably read 'new'.

<sup>8</sup> In the full emended version the missing words are 'on the guarantee were completed either by October 30'.

<sup>9</sup> In the full emended version this sentence reads 'though this might be made earlier if work was finished'.

<sup>10</sup> In the full emended version the missing words are 'shall be'.

per cent. Germans are to be ceded . . .<sup>11</sup> suggest possibility of frontier adjustment in favour of Czechoslovakia for economic and geographical reasons. All lines so far mentioned by Germans have been drawn without Czechoslovakia being heard and . . .<sup>12</sup> German memorandum traces lines which depart considerably from what Anglo-French proposals laid down. Czechoslovakia repeats that she cannot accept . . .<sup>13</sup> in accordance with desiderata set out in German Government's memorandum.

Czechoslovak Government emphasize that if at this advanced stage when agreement has been reached on so many points . . .<sup>14</sup> insurmountable difficulties should arise they would willingly agree to arbitration of differences by President Roosevelt or to summoning of international conference as suggested in M. Masaryk's note of . . .<sup>15</sup> to Lord Halifax. Ends.

Addressed to Foreign Office for repetition to Berlin by bag.

<sup>11</sup> In the full emended version the missing word is 'and'.

<sup>12</sup> In the full emended version the missing word is 'last'.

<sup>13</sup> In the full emended version the missing words are 'a plebiscite'.

<sup>14</sup> In the full emended version the missing words are 'in regard to the whole procedure'.

<sup>15</sup> In the full emended version the missing words are 'September 27'. The reference appears to be to M. Masaryk's note of September 26 (No. 1112).

#### No. 1204

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 29, 8.15 a.m.)*  
*No. 330 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 11021/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 29, 1938

Berlin telegram No. 552.<sup>1</sup>

I have urged Minister for Foreign Affairs to instruct French Minister at Prague to concert with Mr. Newton and to make a joint *démarche* to M. Benes with his British colleague as soon as latter receives instructions.

M. Bonnet has agreed.

Repeated to Munich and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> Nos. 1180-2.

#### No. 1205

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 29, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 790 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 11070/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 29, 1938

In considering time-table for plan my Military Attaché . . .<sup>1</sup> due regard should be had to the effect on it of the mobilisation and subsequent concentration.

Far more troops together with their stocks of . . .<sup>1</sup> and stores will now have to be moved back from frontier districts than would be the case under normal

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.

conditions and many movements already started will have to be reversed. Recognition of this fact . . .<sup>2</sup> is not a sign of bad faith but rather of good faith.

Repeated to Berlin and Munich for Prime Minister.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

#### No. 1206

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 29, 1.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 331 Telegraphic [C 11116/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 29, 1938, 11.25 a.m.

Minister for Foreign Affairs last night and again this morning when we saw M. Daladier off, begged me to urge you how absolutely vital he felt it was that an arrangement should be reached over Sudeten question at Munich at almost any price. M. Bonnet feels that after that, and in the near future, we must make up our minds to proceed gradually to a peaceful modification of many existing frontiers in Europe, as the Treaty of Versailles has collapsed.

#### No. 1207

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 29)*  
*No. 791 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 11071/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 29, 1938, 12.16 p.m.

My telegram No. 788<sup>1</sup>—Please make the following correction[s] in the summary of Czech reply.

Paragraph 6 should begin 'in both cases *before* agreement may have been reached'.

Paragraph 8 should begin 'Czechoslovak Government would accept any date for *definitive* evacuation'.

Paragraph 9 should begin 'Czechoslovak Government earnestly request that'.

Later in the same paragraph passage should read 'in favour of Czechoslovakia where indispensable; the British plan also emphasizes the economic geographical considerations'.

Last sentence of 8th paragraph should read 'At the same time they would agree to a date to mark the final limit and suggest December 15 though this might be made earlier if work was finished'.

I should also add that, in an early part of the note, full text of which will be telegraphed, it is stated that in speech of September 27 Mr. Chamberlain said that Franco-British proposals provided in substance what Herr Hitler desired.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1203.

No. 1208

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 29, 3.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 333 Telegraphic [C 11099/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 29, 1938, 1.20 p.m.

I learn very confidentially that members of the German colony were informed by the German Embassy last night that it was very doubtful that a situation would arise such as compelled them to leave Paris. Explanation given to a few of them was that Signor Mussolini was unable to assure Italian aid to Germany since opinion in Italy was so divided.

Repeated to Munich for the Prime Minister.

No. 1209

*Viscount Halifax to British Delegation (Munich)*  
*No. 1 Telegraphic [C 11089/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 29, 1938, 1.30 p.m.

Czechoslovak Legation inform me M. Mastny, Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin, and M. Lisicki, Counsellor of Legation in London, are proceeding to Munich, to be 'at disposal of British and French Delegations for purposes of information only'.<sup>1</sup>

Message adds that Czechoslovak Government are not taking part in this Conference but are still ready to take part in International Conference when Germany and Czechoslovakia among other nations would be represented.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Newton telegraphed to the Foreign Office and to the British Delegation at Munich in the afternoon of September 29 that M. Mastny was flying to Munich during the afternoon and that on arrival at Munich he would call on Mr. Chamberlain.

No. 1210

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 388 Telegraphic [C 11027/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 29, 1938, 1.40 p.m.

Your telegrams Nos. 784,<sup>1</sup> 787,<sup>2</sup> and 788.<sup>3</sup>

You should at once inform the Czechoslovak Government that their observations as regards the proposed time-table have been communicated to the Prime Minister, who will naturally bear in mind the points to which the Czech Government attach importance. You should however remind the Czech Government at the same time of the assurance contained in my telegram No. 384<sup>4</sup> and express strong hope that they will not render more difficult the Prime Minister's already delicate task by formulating and insisting on objections to the time-table before that has been discussed at Munich. Czechoslovak Government must like all of us have in mind grave alternative

<sup>1</sup> No. 1194.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1196.

<sup>3</sup> No. 1203.

<sup>4</sup> No. 1184.

to success in finding agreed settlement, see my telegram No. 367.<sup>5</sup> It is vital that the Munich discussions should produce speedy and concrete results which would enable direct negotiations between Germany and Czechoslovakia to be initiated. But this can only be achieved if the Czech Government are prepared at this stage to give Mr. Chamberlain a wide discretion and not to tie his hands at the outset by making absolute conditions.

Repeated to Munich No. 2, Berlin, Paris and Rome.

<sup>5</sup> No. 1136.

#### No. 1211

*Mr. Gainer<sup>1</sup> (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 29, 3.30 p.m.)  
*No. 41 Telegraphic [C 11175/65/18]*

VIENNA, September 29, 1938, 2.5 p.m.

Following information derived from perfectly reliable source. Begins. Officer Commanding air defences in Vienna has given instructions that by the evening of September 30 direct telegraph and telephone communication on two lines must be established between Vienna and military aerodrome near Budapest in order that help may be summoned from these if Vienna is raided from air. Only line at present available is one to German Legation at Budapest which has been entirely taken over by German military authorities.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> H.M. Consul-General in Vienna.

#### No. 1212

*Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 29, 4.30 p.m.)  
*No. 560 Telegraphic [C 11123/65/18]*

BERLIN, September 29, 1938, 2.18 p.m.

Following from Military Attaché for Director of Military Operations and Intelligence.

I hear from colleague just returned from tour of Czech frontier areas that troops are concentrated close to frontier behind battle outpost. In many cases infantry regiments consist only of two battalions. The third battalions are apparently forming nucleus of reserve regiments. Formations and units appear completely mobilised, ammunition and supply columns are manned by reservists. All infantry units seen appear to have complete armament to latest scale including in each case heavy infantry guns and full complements of mortars and machine gun type thirty-four. Informant refused to disclose location of troops but stated in at least two cases that two corps were concentrated close to frontier in depth with one corps up and one in support

immediately in rear. I suspect that my informant spent most of his time in Austria. I consider the situation still too delicate at the moment for us to carry out similar reconnaissances.

French Military Attaché saw Deputy Chief of Staff yesterday morning and showed him the latest French plan. Deputy Chief of Staff was very civil and gave the impression that he wished and still genuinely hoped for peaceful solution.

I saw General von Tippelskirch yesterday afternoon after Munich conference had been arranged. In view of this conference we did not discuss British proposals in detail. The General was civil but tough and complained that Germany and his army were still being treated as a defeated country. In 1918 Germans had been forced to carry out all behests at great speed and we had no right to complain if they now demanded similar speed from the Czechs. I made the obvious counter-attacks. The General was most resentful at the fact that Germany has not been left to deal with the Czechs on her own. He clearly thought that in view of Munich conference war was now most improbable but he was in too resentful a mood to evince any relief.

Returning to Berlin yesterday by air I saw no signs of activity on the Dutch frontier and no abnormal rail or road movements on the direct route to Amsterdam-Hanover-Berlin, but there appeared to be very considerable collections of rolling stock at Hanover.

### No. 1213

*Viscount Halifax to British Delegation (Munich)*

*No. 5 Telegraphic [C 11295/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 29, 1938, 6.40 p.m.*

It occurs to me that possible way of treating points 3 and 4 in German memorandum<sup>1</sup> might be to work for agreed compromise on following lines:—

(a) Sudeten German subjects whose homes are within an area to be transferred under agreed terms shall be entitled upon proof of those facts to be discharged from service in the Czech Army or Czech Local Government Service and will be allowed to return home.

(b) Political prisoners now in custody, whose homes are in the territory to be transferred under agreed terms shall be released and allowed to return home.

(c) Similarly as regards subjects dealt with in appendix. Czech Government might undertake not to destroy or render unusable any military, economic or traffic establishments, aerodromes or wireless stations: nor to damage any railway system, nor to remove locomotives or rolling stock. A similar undertaking would be given regarding public utility services. They would undertake not to remove foodstuffs, goods, cattle or raw materials which are the property of any local authority or of any Sudeten German, unless latter desired to remove personal property. Full opportunity should be

<sup>1</sup> No. 1068.

secured for private persons, firms and companies to continue normal trade and business, and in particular peasants desiring to leave area should be entitled to remove their own belongings, including cattle and foodstuffs.

Details of evacuation, checking of material for authorised removal, to be supervised by international commission, by whose decision Czech Government would agree to be bound.

Repeated to Prague and Berlin.

#### No. 1214

*Viscount Chilston (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received September 29, 8.0 p.m.)*

*No. 186 Telegraphic [C 11120/1941/18]*

MOSCOW, September 29, 1938, 6.40 p.m.

United States Chargé d'Affaires yesterday made under instructions from his Government a verbal communication to Acting Commissar for Foreign Affairs suggesting head of the Soviet State or Soviet Government should address a personal appeal for preservation of peace to Germany and Czechoslovakia.

I understand similar instructions were sent yesterday to a number of United States representatives.

Reply of Soviet Government, which was communicated to United States Chargé d'Affaires last night, emphasized peaceful Soviet policy, expressed the Soviet Government's appreciation of the action taken by the President of the United States and, after referring to the Soviet proposal of March last for international conference, states, in the view of the Soviet Government such a conference would prove more effective in the present circumstances than the mediation of France and Great Britain, and finally expresses the readiness of the Soviet Government to support the suggestion of the United States Government that an international conference should be called and themselves to take an active part in it.

I understand that communication made by United States Chargé d'Affaires did not mention an international conference and it is presumed that the Soviet reply refers to the proposal made by Mr. Roosevelt in his latest message to Herr Hitler.<sup>1</sup>

Text by post.<sup>2</sup>

Repeated to Washington and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup>On September 27 President Roosevelt had addressed a further appeal to Herr Hitler to continue negotiations and avoid a resort to force. The relevant passage ran: 'Present negotiations still stand open. They can be continued if you give the word. Should the need for supplementing them become evident, nothing stands in the way of widening their scope into a conference of all the nations directly interested in the present controversy. Such a meeting to be held immediately—in some neutral spot in Europe—would offer the opportunity for this and correlated questions to be solved in a spirit of justice, of fair dealing and, in all human probability, with greater permanence.'

<sup>2</sup> It has not been possible to trace this paper in the Foreign Office archives.



*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 30, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 795 Telegraphic [C 11216/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, *September 29, 1938, 7.40 p.m.*

Following is translation referred to in my telegram No. 788.<sup>1</sup>  
 Begins.

On September 27 His Britannic Majesty's Minister in Prague communicated a suggestion from the British Government on the subject of the progressive handing over to Germany of a part of the territory of the Czechoslovak Republic.

The Czechoslovak Government fully recognises the efforts made by the British Government to reach peaceful solution of this problem and that is why it has as always examined with the greatest care the proposals submitted to it.

In response to the request of the French and British Governments of September 17 . . .<sup>2</sup> the Czechoslovak Government accepted their proposals and assures them that it desires itself their full and loyal realization. In order that there may be no doubt on this subject the Czechoslovak Government agrees that the British and French Governments should be the guarantors to this realization.

In accordance with these ideas the Czechoslovak Government notes that the memorandum submitted to His Excellency Mr. Chamberlain at Godesberg on September 23 differs from the proposals of the British and French Governments on such important points that the Czechoslovak Government was compelled to reject it and Mr. Chamberlain in a speech on September 27 declared that he understood the reasons for which the Czechoslovak Government could not accept these conditions.

In the same speech Mr. Chamberlain said that proposals transmitted after his visit to Berchtesgaden—known under the name of Franco-British proposals—granted in substance what German Chancellor Hitler desired.

Czechoslovak Government accept in principle plan and time-table presented by British Government. It must, however, point out that on some points time-table is not in conformity with Franco-British proposals. The Government accept the whole of point (2) of the plan except arrangements regarding composition of Commission's representatives and Boundary Commission and accept point (4) which speaks of the recall of Czechoslovak Army and State Police. As far as composition of Commission is concerned the Government propose that a French member should also be added and that in the event of representatives not being able to reach agreement amongst themselves the disputed questions should be submitted to arbitration of a representative of the United States.

Czechoslovak Government also accepts the whole of point (4) and point (5).  
 As regards points (1) and (3) it formulates the following objections:—

<sup>1</sup> No. 1203.

<sup>2</sup> A word is missing at this point.

In the Franco-British proposals no special dates were fixed for evacuation and the Czechoslovak Government interpreted these proposals in the sense that evacuation should not be set in motion until competent International Commission should have completed all its work.

Further in our opinion plan of British Government of September 27 differs in two fundamental points from the Franco-British proposals which the Czechoslovak Government had accepted, at the request of the two Governments and in the interests of peace, namely: (1) it demanded immediate evacuation of Asch and Eger; (2) it demanded a progressive evacuation as from October 10; in both cases before conditions for transfer had been agreed upon under supervision of an International Body which would include a Czech representative as set out in the plan of September 19.

Czechoslovakia cannot evacuate her territory nor demobilize nor abandon her fortifications so long as future frontiers have not been precisely delimited and so long as new system of international guarantees which have been promised in Franco-British proposals have not been settled and assured.

Procedure here suggested can be accelerated since the Czechoslovak Government does not wish in any circumstances to retard a definitive solution.

Czechoslovak Government would in fact accept any date for general evacuation if all these conditions were fulfilled; that is to say that if the work of the Commission of Plenipotentiaries and of Boundary Commission had been completed and agreement on guarantees reached, Czechoslovak Government agree that this date might be October 30 or some later date. At the same time it would agree to fixing of a date which would mark the final limit. It would suggest as final limit in question December 15. If the work were synchronised this date might even be earlier, that is to say, any date between October 31 and December 15.

In this connexion it is to be noted that the Czechoslovak Government request earnestly that before the work of Plenary Conference and of the Boundary Commission is begun the principles and facts, on basis of which the new frontier is to be traced, should be settled by diplomatic negotiation.

The Franco-British proposals lay down the principle that the districts which comprise a population of more than 50 per cent. of Germans are to be ceded. At the same time these proposals admit the possibility of obtaining frontier adjustments in favour of Czechoslovakia where these may prove indispensable. The British plan also emphasizes economic and geographical considerations.

All the lines which have been mentioned on the German side up to now have been determined purely from a German point of view without Czechoslovakia being able to have her say and the last German memorandum traces a line which departs very considerably from what had been laid down in the Franco-British proposals.

Czechoslovakia repeats once more that she cannot accept a plebiscite in accordance with desiderata formulated in memorandum of the German Government.

Lastly Czechoslovak Government emphasizes that if at this advanced

stage of negotiations when agreement has been reached on so many points on the subject of the whole procedure, difficulties and insurmountable obstacles should arise, it would willingly agree that the whole dispute (*différend*) should be submitted to the arbitration of His Excellency President Franklin Roosevelt or, as the President of United States himself suggests, that an International Conference should be summoned in accordance with note addressed by M. Masaryk, Czechoslovak Minister, to Lord Halifax on September 27.<sup>1</sup>

Repeated to Berlin, Munich and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> This date should probably read 'September 26'. See No. 1203, note 15.

#### No. 1216

*Viscount Halifax to British Delegation (Munich)*

*No. 10 Telegraphic [C 11164/62/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 29, 1938, 9.30 p.m.*

Information has reached me from moderate circles in Germany that the firm attitude taken by His Majesty's Government during the last few days especially the mobilisation of the fleet and the fact that this attitude has become known to wide circles in Germany by means of broadcasts in German from this country and from Luxemburg and Strasbourg have had considerable effect on German public opinion.

This may if true assist you in negotiations.

#### No. 1217

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received September 30, 12.30 a.m.)*

*No. 795(a) Telegraphic: by telephone [C 11179/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, *September 29, 1938*

Your telegram No. 388.<sup>1</sup>

I will carry out your instructions as soon as possible this evening.

I am glad your telegram was couched in conciliatory tenor because the whole Czechoslovak nation feels that in accepting the Anglo-French proposals they made a supreme and final contribution to peace. The effort made was such as to cause some internal unrest and necessitate a change of Government. It is therefore dangerous to ask them to contribute further as bursting point must be near. French Minister who is still without instructions volunteered to me that he has received one or two confirmations of danger of an explosion. In this connexion I would point out that when Herr Hitler said to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin telegram No. 552<sup>2</sup>) that 'Czechs had undertaken to cede these areas' he was misrepresenting the facts. Czechoslovak Government have not undertaken to cede territories dictated at Godesberg but areas to be delimited in accordance with Anglo-French proposals.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1210.

<sup>2</sup> Nos. 1180-2.

In conversation earlier this evening the Minister for Foreign Affairs said that what Czechoslovak Government chiefly fear is that having stripped themselves of their powers of self-defence they will be attacked nevertheless. . . .<sup>3</sup> the Sudeten question, it would obviously be easy for someone to make an attack, e.g., by alleging Bolshevik activities in Prague or some insult from M. Benes. If anything can be done to meet this perfectly legitimate . . .<sup>3</sup> without delay and to convince the Czechs that when this has taken place they can be sure of being left to peace and independence it would greatly facilitate their acceptance of any plan proposed. Incidentally I am not altogether clear that this has been in your mind when you instructed me to express the hope that Czechoslovak Government will not formulate objections to time-table 'before it is under discussion at Munich'. In making my representations to Dr. Krofta I will omit those words lest he should take them to imply that it would be open to Czechoslovak Government to formulate objections *afterwards*.

Repeated to Munich, Berlin, Paris and Rome.

<sup>3</sup> The text is here uncertain.

#### No. 1218

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 30, 12.30 a.m.)

*No. 801 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 11166/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 29,<sup>1</sup> 1938

Your telegram No. 383,<sup>2</sup> my telegram No. 795.<sup>3</sup>  
10 p.m. September 29.

I made representations accordingly at 8.30 p.m. to Minister for Foreign Affairs who was engaged in a council meeting in the President's . . .<sup>4</sup> palace. Dr. Krofta at once reacted as I had feared by saying it would be absolutely impossible for his country to expose itself by evacuating before the new frontier had been settled. When I pressed him he said perhaps they could withdraw that objection in their reply to immediate occupation of Asch and Eger but that would be the utmost. As I asked for an answer tonight he said he would consult the President then and there who would have to take the responsibility upon himself. It would be no good to consult the rest of the Government or political parties as they could not be brought to agree in time.

On his return Dr. Krofta said that the President had been greatly upset and perturbed by this new approach and had talked, a little wildly I gathered, of the people being driven to desperation and revolution and of the possibility even of massacre. He had agreed however to immediate occupation of Asch and Eger and Egerland generally, outside line of fortifications but only

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was drafted on September 29.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1177. This appears to be an error for telegram No. 388 (No. 1210).

<sup>3</sup> No. 1215.

<sup>4</sup> The text is here uncertain.

(? on)<sup>5</sup> condition that British Legion were at the frontier to act as a screen between German troops and Sudeten area behind.

On my making a reference to a possible French plan Dr. Krofta showed knowledge of it. From this fact and concession reported in the preceding paragraph, I derived an impression which I can only give under all reserve that the Czechoslovak Government might ultimately agree also to immediate or very early occupation of other areas so long as these are outside their fortifications and are screened by the British Legion.

Repeated to Munich, Berlin, Paris and Rome.

<sup>5</sup> The text is here uncertain.

### No. 1219

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 30)*

*No. 636 Saving: Telegraphic [C 11167/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 29, 1938

M. Flandin, whose views I reported in my telegram No. 311,<sup>1</sup> arranged a meeting on September 26 with about 40 members of the minority groups in the Chamber, at which he urged the summoning of Parliament. There was, however, opposition, headed, it is said, by M. Louis Marin.

M. Flandin then issued an appeal to the French people which was published in M. Doriot's paper 'La Liberté' on September 29, and which he placarded in the Paris streets, but which M. Albert Sarraut tells me he has had removed by the police.

The people of France, M. Flandin declared in his appeal, were being deceived. A cunning plan had been laid for weeks and months by hidden forces to render war inevitable. False rumours were being spread, and the people were being made to believe that an inseparable gulf divided the demands of Hitler from those already granted. This was false. The only disagreement was on a question of procedure, namely, whether the German troops should penetrate into the Sudeten territories, now recognised as German, before or after the delimitation of the frontier. Was France, he asked, to lose a million men in a war on such a flimsy pretext? He had urged that Parliament be summoned, but this had been refused him. There were no cowards in France, and if the country were menaced all Frenchmen would rise in defence. But there must be no fraudulent patriotism. The Communist leaders had asked for his arrest, but he preferred to be assassinated rather than to allow his country to be assassinated. He asked all who wished to save peace to address a petition to the President of the Republic against war.

By order of the Minister of the Interior 'La Liberté' was confiscated this morning and the placards removed. The appeal, however, appeared in the 'République' (Right Wing Socialist Radical). M. Flandin thereupon addressed to M. Herriot, as President of the Chamber, a letter saying that he intended to interpellate the Minister of the Interior on the subject.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1132.

M. Bailby in the 'Jour-Écho de Paris' (Right) says that M. Flandin acted rightly. The 'Ordre' (Centre), the 'Populaire' (Socialist) and the 'Humanité' (Communist) attack him strongly. The Vice-President of the Alliance Démocratique, M. Taurines (Senator), has handed his resignation to M. Flandin (the President).

No. 1220

*The Czechoslovak Minister to Viscount Halifax (Received October 1)*  
[C 11298/1941/18]

CZECHOSLOVAK LEGATION,  
8 GROSVENOR PLACE, S.W. 1.  
29th September, 1938

Sir,

Monsieur Benes wishes me to inform His Majesty's Government that M. Mastny, our Minister in Berlin, accompanied by M. Lisicky, Counsellor of the Legation in London, are proceeding to Munich to be at the disposal of the British and French delegations for purposes of information only, as suggested by Mr. Chamberlain.

It is expressly stated that the Czechoslovak Government are not taking part in this conference but are still ready to participate in an international conference where Germany and Czechoslovakia, among other nations, would be represented, as stated in my letter to you on September 20. (Cmd. Paper 5847, Document No. 8, page 18.)

As M. Lisicky, after the conclusion of the conference, has to return to his post in London, I should be deeply obliged if the British delegation could kindly accord him accommodation in one of your air liners.

I have the honour to be, Sir,  
Your most obedient Servant,  
JAN MASARYK

No. 1221

*Viscount Halifax to Viscount Chilston (Moscow)*  
No. 608 [C 11100/1941/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 29, 1938

My Lord,

I invited the Soviet Ambassador to call upon me this morning in order that I might explain to him personally the circumstances out of which the Munich Conference had sprung. I told his Excellency that I was particularly anxious that his Government should not misinterpret the fact that this conference did not include a representative of the Soviet Government. We all had to face facts and one of these facts was, as he very well knew, that the heads of the German Government and of the Italian Government would not

(? on)<sup>5</sup> condition that British Legion were at the frontier to act as a screen between German troops and Sudeten area behind.

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be willing in present circumstances to sit in conference with Soviet representatives. It seemed to us vital, as I believed it would to him, that, if war was to be avoided, we must somehow or other get matters on to a basis of negotiation. It was this conclusion that had led the Prime Minister to make his appeal yesterday to Herr Hitler for a conference, to which, if Herr Hitler so desired, others could be invited. I assured the Ambassador that there was no desire on our part to see the Soviet Government, whose interest in these great issues was as large as our own, in any way excluded from them, and the fact that in present circumstances it might be impossible, if we were to talk to the German and Italian Governments at all, to include the Soviet Government directly in these talks, in no way signified any weakening of a desire on our part, any more, no doubt, than on that of the French Government, to preserve our understandings and relations with the Soviet Government.

2. M. Maisky thanked me for what I had said and, in reply to questions that he asked, I told him that the Prime Minister had made a simultaneous approach to Herr Hitler suggesting a conference and to Signor Mussolini inviting his support for the suggestion at Berlin. That had been done yesterday morning, and on that we had learned that Signor Mussolini had supported the idea which had ultimately issued in Herr Hitler's invitation. This invitation, so far as I knew, had been conveyed simultaneously to the French Government, and they and we had independently accepted it.

3. M. Maisky then pressed me as to whether the Czechoslovak Government would be entitled to have a representative as a member of the conference. To this I replied that this matter was one of those that the Prime Minister had very clearly before him, and in regard to which he would do his best. He had already given an assurance to Dr. Benes that he would bend all his efforts to securing an equitable accommodation between the position of the Czechoslovak and German Governments, and we had asked the Czechoslovak Government to have some responsible representative available for departure to Munich at short notice. So far as His Majesty's Government were concerned, we were naturally now obliged to leave the handling of this matter largely with the Prime Minister, who would, in conjunction with the French Government, do everything that he could to arrive at a reasonable issue from present difficulties. More than that it was not possible at this moment to say.

4. M. Maisky then asked me a good many questions in regard to the guarantee, in reply to which I explained to him that the idea of the Anglo-French plan was to substitute guarantees by France and Russia, if the Soviet Government agreed, for the present treaty arrangements between those countries and Czechoslovakia and to reinforce these by a guarantee given by ourselves. As to Germany, his Excellency would have noticed what the Prime Minister said yesterday in the House of Commons, i.e., that it had not been in our mind to ask Germany to be a guarantor but to ask her to conclude a pact of non-aggression with Czechoslovakia. If we got through the present crisis, there were many questions connected with the guarantee that would require much more consideration than it had yet been possible to give to

them. Such were, of course, whether it should be in character joint or several, who should be invited to take part in it and under what conditions it should be called into operation.

5. In the course of our conversation I told M. Maisky that we were fully alive to the importance of working as closely as we might with his Government at this juncture, and that it had been for this purpose that I had asked Lord De La Warr to have the conversation that I was glad to see M. Litvinov had given him the opportunity of having a few days ago at Geneva.<sup>1</sup>

6. In conclusion M. Maisky thanked me for having asked him to call and said that he hoped that we should keep his Government as closely informed as possible of what passed at Munich. This I undertook to do. His general attitude seemed to me, as, indeed, it was likely to be, one of some suspicion, but not one of resentment in face of facts, which he was perforce obliged to admit. And, as our conversation proceeded, he seemed to discard some of the suspicion.

I am, &c.,  
HALIFAX

<sup>1</sup> See No. 1071.

No. 1222

*Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Lindsay (Washington)*

No. 787 [C 11160/5302/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, September 29, 1938

Sir,

I asked the United States Ambassador to call and see me this afternoon in order that I might have the opportunity of conveying to him the thanks of His Majesty's Government for the help that the President had given by his intervention during the last two or three days. I said that I had no doubt whatever that this had exercised a very powerful influence upon the course of events.

2. The Ambassador was gratified, I think, to feel that the efforts that he himself had made and the action itself were appreciated, and told me that he himself was entirely in sympathy with, and a warm admirer of, everything the Prime Minister had done. The American press had during the last day or two shown a much more true understanding of the position. While feeling that it was legitimate to have good hopes of the Munich Conference, the Ambassador recognised all the dangers and difficulties that still had to be surmounted. The situation, in his view, was one that had to be faced in a spirit of realism by those on whom responsibility rested, although, as he said, there was nothing easier or more attractive than to pursue ideals with small regard to hard realities when no responsibility attached to doing so.

3. I told the Ambassador that we had at present no news from Munich, but that, as soon as we had, we should do our best to keep him fully informed.

I am, &c.,  
HALIFAX

*Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)**No. 1451 [C 11158/1941/18]*FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 29, 1938*

My Lord,

The Italian Ambassador called to see me this afternoon at my request. I told his Excellency that I wished to convey to him my own warm appreciation, which I had no doubt was also shared by all His Majesty's Government, of the support that we had received from Signor Mussolini for the Prime Minister's suggestion to Herr Hitler of a conference on the Czechoslovak situation. Without such support it was legitimate to doubt whether Herr Hitler would have felt able to accede to it. Although I was under no illusion as to the difficulties that still lay in front of us, I thought this might well prove to have been the turning point in the present crisis.

2. The Ambassador was evidently pleased at what I had said as to the value of Signor Mussolini's intervention, and expressed his own confident opinion that the Munich Conference would show the way to settlement. Yesterday the four heads of States were all in their own countries in national atmospheres, and one of them surrounded by the atmosphere of army strength and military might. To-day they stood before the world in the new atmosphere of men seeking together the way of peace, and they simply could not, in his judgment, afford to fail. He had been himself immensely impressed by the restraint, dignity and emotion of the House of Commons yesterday, as he had been by the calm and steadiness of London during the last few days. It was something from which he had learned much, impressed as he had been by the behaviour of the British democracy during the crisis of the abdication.

3. As regards Signor Mussolini's action, Count Grandi felt confident that he had warmly welcomed the opportunity of doing what he had done. It had been easier for him to do it because he had been formally asked by the British Prime Minister, and his Excellency could assure me that it would have been impossible for Signor Mussolini to have persuaded Herr Hitler to hold up mobilisation and agree to a conference if he had not previously given Germany full assurance of military support. He would not conceal from me that, although the Italian nation would do whatever Signor Mussolini told them, the idea of war, and particularly, perhaps, war by the side of Germany, was unpopular. We had, however, constantly to have regard to the mentality of dictators. It was very difficult for us here to understand it. It was nearly all the time a problem of psychology. To illustrate his meaning the Ambassador gave the instance of how great the damage might be that could be done by the suggestion that had begun to find currency in certain quarters that there was a difference of judgment at this time between Signor Mussolini and the King. For this there was no foundation. They understood each other perfectly, and the Italian people had great devotion to both.

4. I said that it was not difficult for me to appreciate the force of what he had said, but I hoped that his Excellency had been able to feel, after watch-

ing the House of Commons yesterday, that British democracy was not incapable of handling with dignity critical situations. The whole question now turned upon whether it would be possible for the Munich Conference to reach agreement concerning the application of the broad principles in regard to which there was so large a measure of common ground. One of the greatest obstacles in the way was the attempt to evolve any scheme that British opinion could accept as reasonably equitable under the operation of a rigid time-limit, and I hoped that we should have the support of Signor Mussolini in the attempt to secure a solution that we could honestly recommend to British opinion. If this was to be done it must, on the one hand, have regard to the broad German claim that we had already conceded and also to the German suspicions, be they ill or well founded, of the Czechoslovak Government and Dr. Benes in particular. On the other hand, we had felt that there were elements in the plan of the German memorandum that, possibly through bad drafting or misunderstanding, could not be defended. Count Grandi expressed the view that, if settlement were to be reached, both sides would have to meet each other a bit, and he was not unhopeful of this being found possible. His own opinion was that Herr Hitler's principal concern was to protect himself against the danger of protracted evasion on the part of the Czechoslovak Government, that might have the effect of leaving him in the position of having failed to secure a settlement until such time as the argument of his military preparations would have been blunted through delay.

I am, &c.,

HALIFAX

No. 1224

*United Kingdom Delegation (Munich) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received September 30, 1938, 4.0 a.m.)

No. 1 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 11118/1941/18]

MUNICH, September 30, 1938

Following is text<sup>1</sup> of agreement reached at Munich on 29th September, 1938, between Germany, the United Kingdom, France and Italy:—

Germany, the United Kingdom, France and Italy, taking into consideration the agreement which has been already reached in principle for the cession to Germany of the Sudeten German territory, have agreed on the following terms and conditions governing the said cession and the measures consequent thereon, and by this agreement they each hold themselves responsible for the steps necessary to secure its fulfilment:—

‘1. The evacuation will begin on 1st October.

‘2. The United Kingdom, France and Italy agree that the evacuation of the territory shall be completed by 10th October without any existing installations having been destroyed, and that the Czechoslovak Govern-

<sup>1</sup> No signed copy of this Agreement can be traced in the Foreign Office archives.

ment will be held responsible for carrying out the evacuation without damage to the said installations.

'3. The conditions governing the evacuation will be laid down in detail by an international commission composed of representatives of Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy and Czechoslovakia.

'4. The occupation by stages of the predominantly German territory by German troops will begin on 1st October. The four territories marked on the attached map<sup>2</sup> will be occupied by German troops in the following order: The territory marked No. I on the 1st and 2nd October; the territory marked No. II on the 2nd and 3rd October; the territory marked No. III on the 3rd, 4th and 5th October; the territory marked No. IV on the 6th and 7th October. The remaining territory of preponderantly German character will be ascertained by the aforesaid international commission forthwith and be occupied by German troops by the 10th October.

'5. The international commission referred to in paragraph 3 will determine the territories in which a plebiscite is to be held. These territories will be occupied by international bodies until the plebiscite has been completed. The same commission will fix the conditions in which the plebiscite is to be held, taking as a basis the conditions of the Saar plebiscite. The commission will also fix a date, not later than the end of November, on which the plebiscite will be held.

'6. The final determination of the frontier will be carried out by the international commission. This commission will also be entitled to recommend to the four Powers—Germany, the United Kingdom, France and Italy—in certain exceptional cases minor modifications in the strictly ethnographical determination of the zones which are to be transferred without plebiscite.

'7. There will be a right of option into and out of the transferred territories, the option to be exercised within six months from the date of this agreement. A German-Czechoslovak commission shall determine the details of the option, consider ways of facilitating the transfer of population and settle questions of principle arising out of the said transfer.

'8. The Czech Government will, within a period of four weeks from the date of this agreement, release from their military and police forces any Sudeten Germans who may wish to be released, and the Czech Government will, within the same period, release Sudeten German prisoners who are serving terms of imprisonment for political offences.

'MUNICH, September 29, 1938.

#### 'ANNEX

'His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the French Government have entered into the above agreement on the basis that they stand by the offer, contained in paragraph 6 of the Anglo-French proposals of 19th September, relating to an international guarantee of the new boundaries of the Czech State against unprovoked aggression.

<sup>2</sup> See Map II at the end of this volume.

'When the question of the Polish and Hungarian minorities in Czechoslovakia has been settled, Germany and Italy, for their part, will give a guarantee to Czechoslovakia.

'MUNICH, *September 29, 1938.*

'The heads of the Governments of the four Powers declare that the problems of the Polish and Hungarian minorities in Czechoslovakia, if not settled within three months by agreement between the respective Governments, shall form the subject of another meeting of the heads of the Governments of the four Powers here present.

'MUNICH, *September 29, 1938.*

#### 'SUPPLEMENTARY DECLARATION

'All questions which may arise out of the transfer of the territory shall be considered as coming within the terms of reference of the international commission.

'MUNICH, *September 29, 1938.*

'The four heads of Governments here present agree that the international commission provided for in the agreement signed by them to-day shall consist of the Secretary of State in the German Foreign Office, the British, French and Italian Ambassadors accredited in Berlin, and a representative to be nominated by the Government of Czechoslovakia.

'MUNICH, *September 29, 1938.*'

Repeated to Prague, No. 1, Saving.

#### No. 1225

*British Delegation (Munich) to Mr. Newton (Prague)*<sup>1</sup>

*No. 2 Saving: Telegraphic [C 11119/1941/18]*

MUNICH, *September 30, 1938*

Addressed to Prague telegram No. 2 Saving of September 30.

Following from Prime Minister.

Text of agreement reached by Four Powers to-night together with map has been communicated here by Prime Minister and M. Daladier to Czechoslovak Minister at Berlin for transmission to Czechoslovak Government.

He is leaving for Prague by air at 6 a.m. with these documents. Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin will accompany him and bring you copy of English text and map.

You should at once see President and on behalf of His Majesty's Government urge acceptance of plan that has been worked out today after prolonged discussion with a view to avoiding conflict.

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was addressed to Prague, and repeated by telephone as No. 2 to the Foreign Office, where it was received at 4 a.m.

You will appreciate that there is no time for argument; it must be a plain acceptance.

Your French colleague has received similar instructions and you should act jointly with him if possible, though if this should involve delay you should act alone.

Please report the result of the interview by telephone to British Delegation, Munich.

Repeated to the Foreign Office, Paris and Rome.

#### No. 1226

*British Delegation (Munich) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 30<sup>1</sup>)*  
*No. 3 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 11168/1941/18]*

MUNICH, September 30, 1938

Reference my telegram No. 1.<sup>2</sup>

(1) Zones 1, 2 and 3 in Article 4 are approximately the same though slightly larger than the Southern, Northern and Western zones respectively on the French proposal.

Zone 4 cuts off a salient in Northern Moravia-Silesia roughly along the line Jägerndorf-Freudenthal-Grulich.

(2) It is proposed that the international commission should meet at Berlin this afternoon.

<sup>1</sup> The hour of receipt of this telegram is not recorded.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1224.

#### No. 1227

*Note by Sir H. Wilson on the Munich Conference, September 29-30, 1938*  
*[C 11970/1941/18]*

The following is a brief account (written from memory) of the meetings at Munich which resulted in the Agreement of the Four Powers (Great Britain, Germany, France and Italy) for the settlement of the Czechoslovak question. (The organisation of the Conference was very imperfect, and there appeared to be no arrangements for the taking of notes. A Secretary-General had been appointed, but he took no part in the Conference for the first four or five hours, and was only one unit in the chaos that ruled for the last five hours.)

On arrival at Munich aerodrome at noon on the 29th September we were at once taken by car to the 'Führer House' and were informed that arrangements had been made to begin the Conference at once. After a short ceremonial meeting, the Conference assembled at 12.30. Those present were:—

Germany—

Herr Hitler.

Herr von Ribbentrop.

Herr von Weizsäcker.

France—

The French Prime Minister.

M. Léger.

Great Britain—  
The Prime Minister.  
Sir Horace Wilson.

Italy—  
Signor Mussolini.  
Count Ciano.

Herr Schmidt—Interpreter.

(Sir Neville Henderson and Sir William Malkin joined the Conference later in the day.)

This meeting lasted till about 3 p.m., when an adjournment was arranged. It began by a brief statement by Herr Hitler thanking those present for their acceptances of his invitation and pointing out the need for speedy decisions. Mr. Chamberlain replied suitably, as did M. Daladier and Signor Mussolini. Towards the close of his remarks Signor Mussolini said that he thought the best way of making progress was for someone to produce a basis for discussion, and he therefore read the Memorandum attached. (Appendix A.) It was evident that this document was a reasonable re-statement of much that had been discussed in the Anglo-French and the Anglo-German conversations, and the Prime Minister was ready to accept it as a basis of discussion by the Conference.

It was, however, the turn of M. Daladier to speak first, and to our relief he at once said he was prepared to adopt Signor Mussolini's document as a basis for discussion. This was agreed.

It then being proposed to take the memorandum clause by clause, the Prime Minister said he was willing to accept Clause 1, but he wanted to discuss carefully Clause 2. This clause proposed that we should guarantee that the Czechoslovak Government should complete evacuation by the 10th October, 'without existing installations having been destroyed'. The Prime Minister pointed out that he could not give such a guarantee for a number of reasons, one being that there had been no opportunity to ascertain how far, if at all, the Czech Government were or would be disposed to consent. This led to a tirade from Herr Hitler (who was otherwise calm throughout most of the Conference), his line being that if—having asked him to stay his hand—we were not prepared to take the responsibility of ensuring the concurrence of Czechoslovakia we had better let him resume his way! He was, in due course, soothed, and there then followed an effort, lasting for more than half an hour, to explain that—whatever others might feel—we regarded the word 'guarantee' as meaning a good deal.

In the course of this discussion the Prime Minister raised the question of the representation at the Conference of the Czech Government. The conclusion was reached that the heads of the four Powers must accept responsibility for deciding—in the circumstances—how the situation should be dealt with.

Eventually we adjourned to reduce to written words what we meant, and we produced a revised edition of this memorandum (Appendix B) containing a preamble (to introduce general responsibility) and an amended Clause 2 to show that the Czechs in turn would be held responsible.

Then followed the first of what proved to be a long series of to-ings and



froings to the other three delegations, first to explain to them what it meant and then to persuade them to agree.

Thereafter—at 3.15—followed an interval for lunch at our hotel and for reflection, with orders to be back at 4.30! We arranged with the French delegation to come to us at 3.45, but they failed us. During lunch we drafted a list of points to be settled.

(In the meantime arrangements had been made for the Czech Minister at Berlin (M. Mastny) and M. Krofta's private secretary (M. Masarik) (who had flown from Prague) to be available at the hotel in the evening. It proved to be impossible for me to see them until 10 P.M. (after a late meal during the evening adjournment for dinner), and I then explained to them the position as it had so far developed, giving them a copy of the map showing the proposed stages of occupation.)

On resuming the Conference at 4.30 the Prime Minister endeavoured to secure progress by concentrating upon the two immediate questions—what was to be the area to be occupied on the 1st October and what was the extent of the area to be occupied by the 10th October, i.e., up to what line? Thanks, however, to an intervention by M. Daladier, the discussion wandered to and fro over Clauses 3 and 4 of this memorandum and over a number of other matters, and it was not until nearly 7 o'clock that we heard what were the German proposals for evacuation and occupation.

During this time the Italians produced a minorities draft (Appendix C) which we could not accept, as it seemed to imply, by the use of the words 'the same principles,' that we were agreeing to the display of force for the transfer to Poland and to Hungary of the 'Polish' and 'Magyar' areas. We prepared a new draft (Appendix D) and secured its acceptance.

The German proposals for evacuation and occupation surprised us by their moderation and by the degree of latitude which they left to the International Commission. They were explained in detail by Herr Hitler by reference to a map, copies of which we were given.

The next hour was spent in a prolonged argument between the French and German Delegations about the Brun [Brünn] 'neck' and the fortifications south of Glatz. Eventually the two Delegations agreed upon a form of words which was subsequently embodied in the last part of Article 6 of the main Agreement.

After a short adjournment for dinner, agreement was reached upon the evacuation areas and upon the time-table.

We inserted in the preamble words to show that the Conference had been working in the light of the fact that it had already been agreed in principle that the Sudeten German areas should be ceded. We also secured the opting clause (Article 7).

Meanwhile a Drafting Committee had been set up (Sir William Malkin representing us) and though they had no time for a proper revision, in due course they produced a less untidy document.

The French Delegation then produced an 'individual and collective' guarantee proposal which we felt unable to accept (no copy available). This

was eventually abandoned in favour of one prepared by Sir William Malkin. This draft, with a minor amendment, was accepted by Count Ciano (who proved helpful) and by Signor Mussolini and was then agreed to by Herr Hitler. It emerged as shown in the first annex to the Agreement.

Earlier in the Conference, when Article 2 was under discussion, we had suggested that any damage done to 'installations' could be deducted from compensation due from Germany to Czechoslovakia, for State property, loans, &c. This led to an outburst from Herr Hitler who repeated the statements he made at Godesberg as to this property (so far as it is new) being built out of the proceeds of the additional taxation levied upon Sudeten Germans during the last twenty years. He denied that any compensation was due to Czechoslovakia. During dinner we had prepared and sent into the Drafting Committee a short clause (no copy available) providing that financial and currency questions arising out of the transfer of the territory should be referred for settlement to a German-Czech Commission with a neutral Chairman. On returning to the Führer House I learnt that this was unacceptable to the Germans (Herr von Ribbentrop in evidence) and that all that Sir William Malkin had been able to arrange was that the draft clause should come up to the Conference as a separate paper. When the draft Agreement came before the Conference this clause was absent. (On enquiry I was told (a) that it was not agreed and (b) that the draft we had sent in had been lost.)

We took a stand on this, pointing out that there must be a number of questions—property, currency, outstanding loans, &c.—of the kind contemplated by the draft clause.

Eventually a way out was found by a clause (the Supplementary Declaration) providing that all questions arising out of the transfer shall be considered as coming within the terms of reference to the International Commission.

After very long delays due to inefficient organisation and lack of control, the Agreement and supplementaries were signed a little before 2 A.M. on the 30th September, and the proceedings concluded by brief expressions of satisfaction.

During the many tedious waits the Prime Minister had some useful conversations with Mussolini and with Count Ciano.

Then arose the question, what to do about the Czechs? It was agreed that each Government should transmit the Agreement to the Czech Government. The French and ourselves, however, had a special interest. M. Daladier declined a suggestion that he should take the Agreement to Prague. It was decided that he and the Prime Minister should together see the Czech representative (who had meantime been waiting at our hotel), and accordingly a meeting took place in the Prime Minister's room about 2.15. I gave M. Daladier the prepared copy (with map) so that he might hand it to M. Mastny. M. Mastny read it and asked a number of questions. He was given a pretty broad hint that—having regard to the seriousness of the alternative—the best course was for his Government to accept what was clearly a considerable improvement upon the German Memorandum. He

and his colleagues said they would fly to Prague and at once place the documents before their Government. We agreed with the French the instructions to go to our respective Ministers at Prague. We sent Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin to Prague with the two Czechs so that he could both carry the instructions to Mr. Newton and add the necessary background. He was also to enquire about the international forces.

It interested us to note that at no time during the Conference did the German representatives raise the question of Czech foreign policy, nor was Russia mentioned.

H. J. W.

*October 1, 1938.*

#### APPENDIX A TO No. 1227

(Provisional Translation.)

##### *Proposals Submitted by the Head of the Italian Government*

The cession, in principle, of the entire Sudeten-German territory (cf. map attached to German memorandum) to the Reich shall take place under the following conditions, subject to corrections which may ultimately result from the plebiscite in the doubtful territories:—

- (1) Evacuation to begin on the 1st October.
- (2) The Guarantor Powers, England, France and Italy, will guarantee to Germany that the evacuation of the territory shall be completed by the 10th October, without any existing installations having been destroyed.
- (3) The conditions governing the evacuation shall be laid down in detail by an international committee in which Germany, England, France, Italy and Czechoslovakia are represented.
- (4) Doubtful territories will be occupied by international forces until the plebiscite has been completed. Under the terms of the Memorandum the conditions of the Saar Plebiscite shall be considered as forming the basis of the plebiscite. The final determination of the frontiers will be carried out by an international committee.
- (5) The occupation, by stages, of the predominantly German territory by German troops will begin on the 1st October.

#### APPENDIX B TO No. 1227

The four Powers have agreed on the following terms and conditions governing the cession of the Sudeten-German territory and the measures consequent thereon, and by this agreement they each hold themselves responsible for the steps necessary to secure its fulfilment:—

- (1) Evacuation to begin on the 1st October.
- (2) The Powers, England, France and Italy, agree that the evacuation of the territory shall be completed by the 10th October, without any existing installations having been destroyed, and the Czech Government will be held responsible for carrying out the evacuation without damage as aforesaid.

(3) The conditions governing the evacuation shall be laid down in detail by an international committee, in which Germany, England, France, Italy and Czechoslovakia are represented.

(4) Doubtful territories will be occupied by international forces until the plebiscite has been completed. Under the terms of the Memorandum, the conditions of the Saar Plebiscite shall be considered as the basis of the Plebiscite.

The final determination of the frontiers will be carried out by an international committee.

(5) The occupation, by stages, of the predominantly German territory by German troops will begin on the 1st October.

#### APPENDIX C TO No. 1227

The heads of the Governments of the four Powers declare that the same principles which have permitted the solution of the problem of the Sudeten Germans should be adopted also for the analogous problems of the Polish and Magyar minorities within a maximum delay of one month and according to a procedure which could be eventually fixed through the usual diplomatic channels or by means of another meeting of the heads of the Governments of the four Powers here present.

#### APPENDIX D TO No. 1227

The heads of the Governments of the four Powers declare that the problems of the Polish and Hungarian minorities, if not settled within three months by agreement between the respective Governments, shall form the subject of another meeting of the heads of the Governments of the four Powers here present.

#### No. 1228

*Note of a Conversation between the Prime Minister and Herr Hitler, September 30, 1938, at the latter's Flat in Munich*<sup>1</sup>

Prime Minister: He was very pleased at the result of yesterday's proceedings, and he hoped that Herr Hitler was equally happy.

• Herr Hitler: He was particularly happy, especially that the hopes of many millions of Germans had now been fulfilled and that the 3½ millions of Sudeten Germans were now going to be once more secure. Their sufferings had indeed been terrible, but now they would be the happiest of all about the result of the conference. In this connection he would like to thank the British Prime Minister once more for his great efforts to bring about a peaceful solution. The most difficult problem of all had now been concluded and his own main task had been happily fulfilled.

<sup>1</sup> This record was made by Dr. Schmidt. The record was sent to Mr. Chamberlain after he had left Munich, and was generally confirmed by him, but this confirmation cannot be taken as an acceptance of the verbal accuracy of the record.

Prime Minister: He warmly appreciated Herr Hitler's words, but there was now something he wished to say to him by way of an appeal. He had been told that Herr Hitler intended, if the Czechs accepted the proposals, to treat them very generously. This was what he (the Prime Minister) would have expected from Herr Hitler, but he was obliged to consider the possibility that the Czech Government might be mad enough to refuse the terms and attempt resistance. In such an eventuality he wanted to ask Herr Hitler to make sure that nothing should be done which would diminish the high opinion of him which would be held throughout the world in consequence of yesterday's proceedings. In particular, he trusted that there would be no bombardment of Prague or killing of women and children by attacks from the air.

Herr Hitler: Before answering that specific question, he would like to say something on a point of principle. Years ago he made proposals for the restriction of the use of the air arm. He himself fought in the Great War and has a personal knowledge of what air bombardment means. It had been his intention, if he had to use force, to limit air action to front line zones as a matter of principle, but even if the Czechs were mad enough to reject the terms and he had consequently to take forcible action, he would always try to spare the civilian population and to confine himself to military objectives. He hated the thought of little babies being killed by gas bombs.

The Prime Minister: He thanked Herr Hitler for these assurances and would now turn to another matter. He wished to report to him a conversation which he had had the previous evening with Signor Mussolini on the subject of Spain. He had suggested to the Duce the possibility that the Four Great Powers might call upon the two sides in Spain to establish an armistice and that they might offer their services in assisting them to arrive at a settlement of their differences. The Duce had said, in reply, that he was tired of Spain. (Here Herr Hitler laughed heartily.) He had lost 50,000 men there; Franco had time and again thrown away his opportunities of securing a victory. He, Mussolini, was no longer afraid of Bolshevistic domination. He had never had any territorial aims in Spain, and it was his intention shortly to withdraw a considerable body of Italians. As to the suggestion, the Duce had expressed his intention of thinking it over. Had the Führer anything to say upon this subject?

Herr Hitler: First of all he desired to repeat what he had many times said before, that Germany had no territorial ambitions in Spain, and that all these rumours about her desiring to occupy Morocco or any other territory were pure invention. He had only supported Franco against bolshevism, of which they had had experience in Munich. He did not know whether it was true that the danger of communism in Spain was over (here the Prime Minister interjected: 'The Duce says so'), and he did not know how it would be possible to induce the two parties to agree to a truce, but he agreed with Mussolini that the end of the Spanish conflict would be welcome, and he would be delighted to withdraw the few German volunteers who were there

as soon as ever the others were willing to do the same. If Spain were to become Communist, he feared that the infection would spread to France, from France to Belgium, from Belgium to Holland, and one did not know where it would stop.

The Prime Minister: He too did not know how a truce could be secured, but he had thought that if the two sides received a call from the Four Great Powers they might well be induced to listen and that, once the truce had been called, the Powers might be able to help in getting a settlement. However, he only now wished to report to the Führer what had passed between himself and Mussolini on this subject and he hoped that the Führer too would give it his personal attention.

Herr Hitler assented.

The Prime Minister: Whenever they began to talk about future Anglo-German relations, no doubt the Führer would have some requests to make and he would not be surprised if, in turn, the Prime Minister asked something from him. (Here the Führer smiled broadly.) He was oppressed by the thought of the increasing burden which was being imposed upon all countries by the expenditure upon armaments, which was eating up the capital which ought to be employed on building houses, on better food and on improving the health of the people. Accordingly he had listened with sympathy to Herr Hitler's views on the restriction of air action, but it seemed to him that the difficulty was in inducing people to believe that agreements to abstain from air bombardment would in fact be carried out in practice. They could see to-day both in Spain and China how women and children and civilians were being blown to pieces by aerial bombing, but whenever a protest was made to those responsible for this bombing they replied always that they had been aiming at military objectives and that the civilians had suffered because of their proximity to them.

Several efforts had been made in the past to bring about disarmament, but only one of them had been at all effective, namely, that which began as the Washington Treaty and was continued in London, in which the tonnage of warships and the calibre of their guns was [*sic*] limited. Basing his views on this experience, he concluded that the qualitative method of restricting armaments was the one which had the most practical results and, moreover, had the additional advantage that it was more easy to control. It was much more possible to see that a country was not constructing bigger weapons than it had agreed to than it was to make sure that it was not constructing more such weapons.

Bombing from the air had now become a highly specialised affair for which machines with specialised devices and instruments had been developed, and it was no longer possible to maintain that it was of no use to abolish the bombing machine because bombs could still be dropped from civilian machines. It was true that bombs could be dropped from any machine in the air, but to make an effective military use of them it was nowadays necessary to use the highly specialised instrument which had been devised for this

purpose. Therefore the abolition of bombing aircraft seemed to him to be the practical thing to agree upon.

He knew what the Führer would say in reply to this proposal. He would say that it would be all very well if he were dealing only with him or with France and Italy, but there was Russia and Russia would not agree. Nevertheless, bearing in mind the perfection which had been reached by the modern fighter machine and also the pitch of efficiency to which Herr Hitler had brought his anti-aircraft defences, and bearing also in mind that in future he need no longer regard Czechoslovakia as a starting-off place for Russian aggression, could he not feel that Russia could be left out of account?

Herr Hitler: The situation about air disarmament is just the same as it is in the case of the naval situation. If a single nation refuses to agree, all the others have to follow her example. One sees what has happened in the case of the Naval Treaty. When Japan refused to agree, all the other nations had to give up their restriction. It would be just the same if one tried to abolish bombing aircraft. It could only be accepted if all did the same. He himself had proposed years ago—

1. The abolition of bombing aircraft;
2. If '1' could not be accepted, the abolition of bombing outside a zone of 15 to 20 kilom. from the front line; and
3. If neither '1' nor '2' were accepted, the limitation of bombing to a zone which could be reached by heavy artillery.

He himself was particularly attached to '1', which was, in his view, in line with the Geneva Agreement providing for the exemption of non-combatants from the effects of warfare. The development of bombing from the air extends the horrors of war to the non-combatant population and is therefore a barbarism.

Modern bombers have a range from 6,000 to 8,000 kilom. Unlike Germany, whose ideology is confined to herself, Russia's ideology is an article for export. Poland intervenes geographically between Germany and Russia, but he had no very clear idea of her powers of resistance. The same is the case with Roumania. As to Czechoslovakia, he did not know whether the Czechs had changed their mind, but they had only got to prepare a few landing grounds and it would be possible for Russia to land from 2,000 to 4,000 machines in a space of from two to three hours. One ought not to over-estimate the effectiveness of anti-aircraft defences and devices, especially in the case of Germany, where her vulnerable industrial establishments were so close to the frontier that they could be destroyed before the anti-aircraft defences had adequate warning to put themselves into operation. To give practical effect to the Prime Minister's suggestion, it would be necessary to effect an all-round international agreement.

The Prime Minister: Then it is understood that Herr Hitler does not exclude the participation of Germany in such an agreement by the nations which, to be universal, would, of course, mean the assent of Russia and in turn of Japan.

Herr Hitler: The most universal measure ever taken for the limitation of armaments was the Red Cross agreement when the Powers decided that they would not revert to actions which used to be, at one time, general, such as the killing of prisoners, &c. It was only possible because the whole world agreed to it.

The Prime Minister: He would now leave this question and turn to another, namely, the relations between Germany and South-Eastern Europe. He had read expressions of German opinion indicating a suspicion that England desired not a military but an economic encirclement of Germany. This was a suspicion which, if entertained, was without foundation. He, however, desired to see an improvement in international trade. Yesterday's proceedings would certainly ease the political tension, but something more positive was required in the economic sphere and he would particularly like to see a relaxation in the restrictions on international trade which now existed. Had the Führer any suggestions to make on this subject?

Herr Hitler: In South-Eastern Europe German relations were economic, but there were no political ties. These economic relations were quite natural because Germany is a great producer of industrial articles and a large consumer of raw materials and foodstuffs. The Balkan States are the other way round. They produce the primary products and consume industrial articles. The greatest difficulties which Germany had experienced with the United States were because Germany was willing to import raw materials and food from the United States, but the United States could not accept payment in the only form which was possible to Germany, namely, the export of industrial goods, because the United States was herself an immense producer of these goods and at the time had 12,000,000 unemployed. That was why Germany had been unable to settle her difficulties with the United States.

One day, but not now when there was so little time, he would like very much to have a full discussion with the Prime Minister on these economic problems. His own idea for the reconstruction of world economy was that it should not be on an artificial basis, but that it should be founded on national exchanges between primary producers and producers of industrial goods. International trade could not be permanently improved by artificial means such as tariffs or loans. He wanted a continuous flow of the exchange production of raw materials against industrial products, and that his theory was not wrong was shown by the fact that there was in Germany a considerable internal prosperity, and this was due to the fact that he had organised this exchange on the lines he had indicated.

The Prime Minister: It certainly would be interesting some day to have a talk upon this profoundly important problem, and he would only say now that it seemed to him that there was a considerable difference between the internal conditions in Germany, which were under a strict central control, and the regulation of the relations between different countries where there was no such control. Moreover, he would have thought that, even if Herr Hitler's theories were not only correct but capable of being put into practice,



there would still be required loans to facilitate this flow into the two directions mentioned by Herr Hitler.

Now, he would not keep Herr Hitler any longer, but he wished to say that he thought it would be a pity if this meeting passed off with nothing more than the settlement of the Czech question, which had been agreed upon yesterday. What he had in mind was to suggest to Herr Hitler that it would be helpful to both countries and to the world in general if they could issue some statement which showed the agreement between them on the desirability of better Anglo-German relations, leading to a greater European stability. Accordingly, he had ventured to draft a short statement which he would now ask Herr Hitler to read and to consider whether he would be disposed to issue such a statement over the signatures of himself and the Prime Minister to the public. As these observations were translated to Herr Hitler he ejaculated at intervals 'Ja! Ja!' and when it was finished he said he would certainly agree to sign this document. When did the Prime Minister wish to do so?

The Prime Minister: Immediately.

Herr Hitler: Then let us sign.

At this point, they both rose, went to a writing table and, without any further words, appended their signatures to the document (copy attached as Appendix), of which the Prime Minister handed Herr Hitler one copy to keep and retained the other.

#### APPENDIX TO No. 1228

We, the German Führer and Chancellor and the British Prime Minister, have had a further meeting to-day and are agreed in recognising that the question of Anglo-German relations is of the first importance for the two countries and for Europe.

We regard the agreement signed last night and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement as symbolic of the desire of our two peoples never to go to war with one another again.

We are resolved that the method of consultation shall be the method adopted to deal with any other questions that may concern our two countries, and we are determined to continue our efforts to remove possible sources of difference and thus to contribute to assure the peace of Europe.

(Signed) A. HITLER.

(Signed) NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN.

*September 30, 1938.*

#### No. 1229

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 30, 7.50 p.m.)  
No. 821 Telegraphic [C 11244/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, September 30, 1938

In a broadcast appeal this evening at 5 o'clock General Sirovy, the President of the Council, said that the Czechoslovak Government had decided to

accept the terms of the Munich Agreement as they had been given to understand that in the event of refusal they could expect no assistance. They accepted with bleeding hearts and this was the bitterest moment of his life. The evacuation would be started tomorrow and a plebiscite would take place later. The Government could have decided to stand up against overpowering forces but it would have meant the death of millions.

General Krejci, the Commander-in-Chief, followed. He said that the highest courage of a soldier was shown in adversity. He appealed to the army to do its duty in these sorrowful days and not to be led by sentiment. The country was proud of its army which would be needed in days to come. The army had pledged its word to obey its supreme commander, the President of the Republic, and he was fully satisfied that it would do so.

Repeated to Berlin.

### No. 1230

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received October 1)*  
*No. 644 Saving: Telegraphic [C 11255/1941/18]*

PARIS, September 30, 1938

Munich Agreement was unanimously approved by Cabinet Council on the evening of September 30. It was decided that Parliament should be summoned on October 4, so that M. Daladier might explain the Agreement.

### No. 1231

*The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received October 3)*  
*No. 877 [C 11439/1941/18]*

ROME, September 30, 1938

My Lord,

It may be of use to you and perhaps be of historical interest if I place on record in some detail the course of those events in Rome on the morning of the 28th September which led to the postponement for twenty-four hours of the decision taken by the German Chancellor that the German army should be mobilised and an advance into Czechoslovak territory made at 2 o'clock on that day.

2. After reading the Prime Minister's declaration made in the early morning of the 27th September,<sup>1</sup> in which he stated that he was himself prepared to be responsible for the loyal and full execution by the Czechoslovak Government of the Anglo-French proposals which that Government had accepted, it seemed to me that it might well be worth while asking Signor Mussolini, who had just returned from his tour in the Veneto—his last speech, at Verona, had been couched in determined but not intransigent language—

<sup>1</sup> See No. 1121.

whether he would not be prepared to support with Herr Hitler the Prime Minister's latest proposals.

3. I considered for a short time whether I should not at once go down to see Count Ciano and make such a suggestion to him on my own personal responsibility, but I felt that any such appeal would carry far more weight if it had behind it the official authority of His Majesty's Government. Accordingly, on the morning of the 27th, I sent your Excellency a telegram<sup>2</sup> which was telephoned to the Foreign Office and was couched in the following terms: 'It might possibly be helpful if I were authorised to convey officially and immediately to Count Ciano the Prime Minister's declaration made after Herr Hitler's speech, and to express on behalf of His Majesty's Government the hope that Signor Mussolini would use his influence to induce Herr Hitler to accept the proposals contained therein.'

4. Your Lordship replied in a telegram which was despatched on the night of the 27th,<sup>3</sup> and which was received in Rome early on the morning of the 28th, and informed me that a circular telegram had already been issued to His Majesty's representatives instructing them to communicate the Prime Minister's declaration to the Governments to which they were accredited. I was thus instructed to make this communication to the Italian Government. You added that in doing so I might speak to Count Ciano in the sense I had suggested. I found this reply awaiting me when I started work at 9.30 A.M., and I immediately asked whether Count Ciano could receive me. An answer reached me that the Minister for Foreign Affairs would be ready to receive me at once. I hesitated a little as there were still three days to go before the 1st October, and I had no knowledge of the new ultimatum due to expire in five hours' time and I had not altogether marshalled my arguments and my ideas, but in view of the fact that Count Ciano's time was likely to be extremely occupied, and in view of the urgency of the question, I decided to go and see his Excellency as soon as possible. I arrived at the Palazzo Chigi at about 10.20 A.M. When I came into Count Ciano's room I found him looking very grave. Before I could broach the object of my visit he said that he had just received another visitor who had been eager to explain a complicated point not directly connected with the present crisis; this, however, would have taken at least half an hour, and on a morning like the present he could not spare either the time or the thought necessary to consider such matters. I realised from this that there must be some new element in the situation of which I was unaware, and that matters must have entered a phase more critical even than I had thought. I then said to Count Ciano that he had no doubt seen the declaration made by the Prime Minister after the German Chancellor's speech. I was instructed to hand him an extract from that declaration and to express the earnest hope of His Majesty's Government that Signor Mussolini would see his way to exercise his influence with Herr Hitler to persuade him to accept the undertaking given by the Prime Minister.

5. I said that that was the end of my instructions, but that I felt that perhaps Signor Mussolini was the only man who could now induce Herr

<sup>2</sup> No. 1125.

<sup>3</sup> Not printed. See No. 1125, note 2.

Hitler to accept a pacific solution. What would be the result of war?—one thing alone. I felt that unless Herr Hitler accepted the Prime Minister's proposal a European war was inevitable. The Minister for Foreign Affairs interrupted: 'A world war.' 'But', he said, 'what do you and the French intend to do? Herr Hitler will not attack you. He will occupy the Sudeten territory and then wait with folded arms. Will France and England attack Germany?' I said that I was convinced that there would be a state of war between France and Germany; that clearly meant hostilities and we should assuredly be unable to keep out. The Minister for Foreign Affairs remarked: 'But you do not want to fight in alliance with Russia.' I replied that we did not want war at all, but if it came Russia was bound by treaty to Czechoslovakia. At this point Count Ciano turned to me and asked, with great seriousness, whether my *démarche* constituted an official step by the British Government to ask Signor Mussolini to endeavour to persuade Herr Hitler to accept Mr. Chamberlain's undertaking. I answered that it did. 'Then,' he said, 'there is no time to be lost; it is a question of hours, not days.' Hitler had given till the 1st October for the handing over of all the Sudeten territories, but he had reserved the right of immediate action if necessary. This hint of immediate action was the first intimation I had that grave events might be impending that very day. Count Ciano added that to show his goodwill he would at once go over and see Signor Mussolini. He asked me to await his return.

6. The Minister for Foreign Affairs came back from the Palazzo Venezia in about a quarter of an hour and told me that Signor Mussolini, who felt more than appreciative (feelings which Count Ciano himself shared) of the intense efforts made by Mr. Chamberlain on behalf of peace, had sent telephonic instructions to the Italian Ambassador at Berlin to see Herr von Ribbentrop at once and to ask that a message might be conveyed immediately to the German Chancellor to the effect that, while Italy would fulfil completely her pledge to stand by Germany (Count Ciano added to me that it was not only in Italy's interest to do so, but her honour and pledged word required it), yet in view of the great importance of the request made by His Majesty's Government to Signor Mussolini, the latter hoped that Herr Hitler would see his way to postponing for twenty-four hours the action which the Chancellor had told Sir Horace Wilson would be taken at 2 P.M. that day, so as to allow Signor Mussolini time to re-examine the situation and to put forward new proposals for a peaceful settlement. Count Ciano promised to let me know as soon as an answer was received from Berlin.

7. I returned to the Embassy about 11.15 A.M. and found there a telegram from your Lordship (No. 408 of the 28th September),<sup>4</sup> which had been transmitted by telephone from the Foreign Office at 11 A.M., instructing me to communicate the following personal message from the Prime Minister to the Duce:—

'Signor Mussolini.

'I have to-day addressed a last appeal to Herr Hitler to abstain from

<sup>4</sup> No. 1159.

force to settle the Sudeten problem, which, I feel sure, could be settled by a short discussion and will give him the essential territory, population and protection for both Sudetens and Czechs during the transfer. I have offered myself to go at once to Berlin to discuss arrangements with German and Czech representatives, and, if the Chancellor desires, representatives also of Italy and France.

'I trust your Excellency will inform the German Chancellor that you are willing to be represented and urge him to agree to my proposal. It will keep all our peoples out of war. I have already guaranteed that the Czech promises shall be carried out, and feel confident that full agreement could be reached in a week.'

8. Immediately on the arrival of this telegram the chancery had telephoned to me at the Palazzo Chigi, but I had just left to return to the Embassy. As I read the Prime Minister's message there came vividly to my mind the efforts made by Sir Edward Grey in the critical days preceding the outbreak of the war in 1914—efforts which unhappily failed—to assemble the statesmen of the Great Powers directly interested, round a table. With a feeling of fresh hope I left again to see Count Ciano and communicated the message to him. After he had read it, he once more expressed his admiration for Mr. Chamberlain's endeavours, and said that he would at once go and again see Signor Mussolini. I said to the Minister for Foreign Affairs that perhaps the Prime Minister would wish me to communicate the message personally to the Duce, but in view of the urgency of the matter I would leave any decision on this point to him. Count Ciano hesitated and then remarked that he thought perhaps time would be saved if he were to see the Duce in the first instance, at any rate, alone. Being completely persuaded that the Minister for Foreign Affairs would do all that was possible to ensure peace, I abstained from pressing the point further. He therefore went to the Palazzo Venezia and I again waited at the Palazzo Chigi. Count Ciano was away about twenty minutes. His face announced his happiness on his return, and he said to me: 'Very good news; very, very good news. Herr Hitler has agreed at Signor Mussolini's request to postpone the German mobilisation for twenty-four hours, and I am also authorised to tell you that Signor Mussolini will support with, and recommend to, Herr Hitler the acceptance of the proposals for a conference between the four Powers and ask to be represented at it.' Count Ciano came up to me and said: 'We have done, I think, a very good morning's work.' We shook hands. On my return to the Embassy I at once sent you two short telegrams<sup>5</sup> indicating Signor Mussolini's action and its results. I gather from the press that these telegrams reached your Lordship at no inopportune moment.

9. I will only add one observation. Had not His Majesty's Government decided to pursue that policy of conciliation and friendship towards Italy which culminated in the Anglo-Italian Agreement of April last, it is more than doubtful whether His Majesty's Government, or even the Prime Minister

<sup>5</sup> Nos. 1166-7.

himself, would have been in a position to make any approaches to Signor Mussolini of the nature of those which I have described, and, even had they been made, whether Signor Mussolini would have felt inclined to respond to them. Had he not done so could war have been averted?

I have, &c.,

PERTH

## APPENDIX I

### Additional Letters from Sir N. Henderson, August–September, 1938

In addition to the letters exchanged between the Secretary of State and Sir N. Henderson included above in this volume the Foreign Office archives contain copies of three other letters from Sir N. Henderson to the Secretary of State, three to Sir Horace Wilson, and a note by Sir N. Henderson giving his impressions of the Nuremberg Congress. These papers are included in this appendix.

#### *Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, August 11, 1938

Dear Secretary of State

I have just received yr. letter of the 5th<sup>1</sup> and am most grateful to you for finding time to write to me.

I shall answer it as soon as I can but as the King's messenger leaves with this in an hour I have but time to scribble a line to tell you that I am acting on yr. suggestion as regards keeping Lord Runciman informed of the situation as I see it here. As there is a bag leaving for Prague today and may not be another for some time, I am venturing to send Newton copies of the last two private letters which I wrote you on Aug. 6th<sup>2</sup> and 8th<sup>3</sup>, leaving out some of the personal bits about Lord Runciman himself. I had thought of doing this before—with yr. permission—but was deterred by the fear lest it might be regarded as pressure on an independent adviser and mediator. I hope you will not object to my doing so now, but time is important and I have none available if I am to catch the bag.

I also send you [a] copy of the beginning of the private letter which I am writing to Newton,<sup>4</sup> covering those to you. As you will see from those two letters to you (which had not reached you when you wrote me yours of Aug. 5th) our general appreciation of the position is not dissimilar.

Marshal Balbo is here on a visit to Goering and at the Italian Embassy last night I met both Goering and Ribbentrop. I had little conversation with either and in particular with the former was unfortunately interrupted. But judging from a general impression—which is sometimes as valuable as actual words often used to conceal real thoughts—I was relieved. They were friendly and did not seem nervous. Goering's remarks to my French colleague cld. be summed up as 'We are giving Runciman his chance. But you'll see that we were right and Benes never seriously meant business. In the end the only solution will be to incorporate the Sudeten in Germany.' The Germans are damnably stupid but I cannot believe that they will aggress the Czechs so long as Runciman is still at Prague.

The U.S. Ambassador<sup>5</sup> saw Benes at Prague: his general view was (unlike what he has said so far) that Benes is trying and that he has lost most of his bounce and is anxious. He impressed on Wilson the opposition on the part of his extremists to concessions. I told Wilson that the answer was that he should have educated his people up sooner, through the Press &c., to the necessity for concessions. One realises Benes' difficulties but that has surely been a great mistake.

<sup>1</sup> No. 587.

<sup>2</sup> No. 590.

<sup>3</sup> No. 594.

<sup>4</sup> See No. 643, note 3.

<sup>5</sup> Mr. Hugh Wilson.

Another point Wilson remarked on—in a good sense—was the readiness of the Sudeten to go on with the negotiations and their apparent desire for a solution—if it is a real one.

In a bad sense, he noted the bellicosity of the younger Czech military.

In great haste

Yrs.

NEVILLE HENDERSON

Lord Allen of H[urtwood] saw Ribbentrop yesterday and has gone to Prague. I did not unfortunately see him after his talk with Rib. but I did before and put some points to him which I thought might be useful.

N. H.

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Nuremberg) to Sir H. Wilson*

[C 10238/1941/18]

NUREMBERG, September 9, 1938

My dear Horace Wilson,

The moment for X<sup>1</sup> is not come in my opinion. Here at Nuremberg it would be out of the question. I have done all I can to prevent anything unpleasant or rather too unpleasant being said in Monday's speech. I have had long talks with Göring and Goebbels as well as Ribbentrop and Neurath and others galore. I feel very strongly that the bolt must not be shot now: it may be needed and urgently needed later: now it would risk being shot in vain and prematurely. And for Heaven's sake send no more instructions as on May 21st. Believe me that would utterly defeat our object and ensure what we are trying to avoid. God knows I may be wrong but I must take this responsibility. I have made the position as clear as daylight to the people who most matter and our best friends tell me that another May 21st would upset the whole apple cart in Hitler's present mood. Once Runciman has spoken, once H.M.G. have decided that such or such solution at Prague is just and likely to be permanent, then we can say 'if you try to force another solution, beware', but not before. The solution lies at Prague, not Berlin today. Henlein himself has the Plebiscite solution up his sleeve if Benes will not agree to something amounting to the Karlsbad programme. That is better than driving Hitler over the edge with another May 21st.

I suggested to Goebbels today that a line for Hitler's Monday's speech might be as follows: 'I welcomed British intervention in May as I hoped H.M.G. might persuade Benes to be reasonable. Benes was not sufficiently so and H.M.G. sent out Lord Runciman. Though the German Government was not consulted, we have not interfered and we still hope he will find a way out and we are still prepared to co-operate with H.M.G. in seeking a peaceful solution locally, i.e. between Czechs and Sudeten.' Goebbels said he would speak to Hitler and was far from discouraging the suggestion. If Hitler says anything like this he will surely add his ideas as to a peaceful solution which cannot be less than Karlsbad programme. He will certainly add that Germany cannot trust Benes and that something will have to be done to see that whatever Benes promises is faithfully executed.

<sup>1</sup> 'X' and 'Z' were terms used for the suggestion that Mr. Chamberlain should go to see Herr Hitler. X seems to have been applied to Mr. Chamberlain himself and the general project of his visit; Z appears to have referred specifically to a visit to Berchtesgaden.



Anyway my view (and it is better to trust me even if I am wrong) is that all has been done now and we must await Monday's speech and pray that no further incidents occur in the meantime in Czechoslovakia. Göring assured me that no aggression was contemplated and certainly no sudden one. But if Benes goes on 'havering' that is what will provoke Hitler.

Germany can scarcely actively aggress while Runciman is at Prague and before he has come out with some declaration. Z simpliciter. I am against it without previous arrangement with Hitler and certainly as I see things, at present I would prefer the alternative in principle, though I can visualise a situation where previous arrangement might be impossible owing to time factor. But I don't see that yet. Much depends on Monday and as I have already said I don't believe Hitler will bang the door though he may bang it if I make another communication like May 21st. Göring said again yesterday to me 'Chamberlain and Hitler must meet'. So that I don't fear a rebuff very much in principle, unless German honour is already involved so that Hitler can't go back on his decision.

Hitler's position is that of a man bluffing with a full house in his hand. If his bluff fails, he will show his full house, not throw in his hand. The solution lies in Prague and if Benes (and he won't) can't go far enough on his own, then Lord Runciman must come out with something of his own. But before Runciman has done this, Hitler, though he may thunder on Monday, will not burn his boats. That is my belief and I must back it, with a full sense of the great responsibility that I am taking.

Both Ribbentrop and Göring told me that Henlein had reassured Hitler about Runciman, so that I feel that Hitler will give Runciman credit and wait. My only real apprehension is the unpredictability of Hitler and his moods. One cannot *guarantee* anything for that reason. I can but advise what I believe to be best: I am acquainted with the views of H.M.G. and being on the spot I feel that they would be well advised to trust me. There are so many rumours and so much wind up in every quarter that it is much more likely that I can gauge the temperature. One thing is of course certain. None of us can ever think of peace again till Benes has satisfied Henlein. Henlein wants peace and will agree with Benes if the latter is made to go far enough. Even if we forced the Germans to accept terms which would not satisfy the Sudeten, it would not mean peace. Versailles was the error which has got to be corrected. Much as I hate saying so, that is the hard fact. Otherwise we must fight Germany again. It is revision by war or revision by peaceful negotiation, which in fact means compulsion at Prague and not Berlin, because compulsion here settles nothing.

Göring said to me yesterday: 'It is true that Hitler has decided that a solution must be found and if no time limit has been fixed German patience (i.e. Hitler's) has a limit all the same. If a solution can be found locally at Prague, all the better: if not, and we do not believe Benes will ever yield, then another solution must be found outside Prague. Benes cannot go on for ever refusing Germany's just pretensions on behalf of Germans who were just as much part of the old Austria as the Austrians themselves.'

That is an accurate, in my opinion, summary of the situation. Neurath too agrees with my appreciation of the position as I exposed it in London. He is convinced that Hitler will be more moderate on Monday than people imagine. But he has not seen Hitler.

Even Ribbentrop this morning was not unreasonable. His attitude was 'Provided Benes *does* something at once and does not merely talk. We don't believe a word

of his promises: only acts will make us believe he is genuine.' No German believes that Benes will loyally execute anything.

Forgive this scrawl. I had expected to be on the way back to Berlin having done all I can here and this is all I have to write on. The conditions one lives in, in a wagonlit compartment here, are inconceivable. I've had the greatest difficulty in getting a room in Nuremberg for the unfortunate messenger who returns with this. That is one reason why I want to get back to Berlin. Anything more I say here is mere repetition and we must wait with anxiety for Monday.

I shall see Neurath again tomorrow morning but another May 21st will, in my opinion, wreck all prospect of a peaceful outcome.

Yours very sincerely,  
NEVILLE HENDERSON

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Nuremberg) to Sir H. Wilson*

NUREMBERG, midnight, September 9, 1938

My dear Wilson,

While I greatly doubt H. being ill and refusing to see X, he might if things had gone so far that he regarded German honour would not allow him to stop. I do not feel that the risk should be run, as such a rebuff to X could scarcely be tolerated. I feel I should have to advise on this when you telephoned about Z and that Z should not function until *after* you had telephoned.

H. will presumably go to Berchtesgaden as soon as Nuremberg is over.

I feel much more certain that the answer would not be No if there was previous arrangement: and *I don't really like the idea of proceeding without previous arrangement*. I would not advise it unless it was practically impossible to hope to save the situation except by a departure at the very moment itself.

I don't believe that 'kudos' aspect would appeal much if H. felt that German honour (his idea of it) had been so injured that action alone could satisfy it.

Yours ever,  
NEVILLE HENDERSON

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Nuremberg) to Sir H. Wilson*

[C 10238/1941/18]

NUREMBERG, September 10, 1938

8 a.m. additions to overnight on a piece of paper a secretary has just brought me from Berlin.

The form of Hitler's genius is on the borderline of madness. He may already have stepped over the edge as some people believe. If he has, there is nothing to be done except believe that '*Quem Deus vult perdere*'.

A second 21st May will push him over the edge. That I truly and honestly believe: if not of actual madness, of mad action.

If the worst comes H.M.G. can truly say that the instructions they are now sending will have already been communicated by me to Ribbentrop and Göring to Neurath and others—Everybody here knows that I've been running round here like a lunatic myself and no one who is here will doubt this for a moment.

The Germans will know of the courier from London and the secretary from Berlin. I told Neurath yesterday of the man from London. I shall see Neurath

this a.m. at one of the meetings (Hitler Youth): and since I have not got definite final instructions I shall tell him the gist of those instructions but say that H.M.G. are thinking on those lines but still have confidence in Hitler's sincerity in his desire for peace.

I do not believe that Hitler is contemplating a 'recourse to force' *now*. He may be violent in his speech but not that kind of violence yet. An official *démarche* will drive him to greater violence or greater menaces. Other sources may think they know better and Heaven knows how easily I may be wrong. But even if I am, another warning will not help. If he has decided, that will not alter his decision. If he has not decided, that will help him to do so, that is all.

The messenger has just come for this so I must stop.

Yours ever,  
NEVILLE HENDERSON

*Note by Sir N. Henderson giving his impressions at Nuremberg*

[C 10238/1941/18]

NUREMBERG, September 10, 1938

Hitler when he received diplomats was not to be drawn into politics. French Ambassador when saying good-bye said 'I hope Your Excellency can give me a favourable prognosis?' Hitler's answer was 'What of? The weather? The forecasts are always wrong.'

The most pessimistic people here are the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Weizsäcker says 'The situation is very, very serious', and the others say the same. At the same time Weizsäcker says too 'Another 21st May would be fatal. The solution lies in Prague and in what you can say here.'

I spoke with brutal frankness to Göring. I asked him as a personal suggestion in connection with some complimentary remark which Göring made about Runciman, whether he thought it would be a good thing if Lord Runciman visited Hitler. He said that he could not say offhand but he obviously did not favour the idea and saw no object in it.

Göring said 'We won't aggress the Czechs. It is they who will provoke us.' He gave me to understand that Henlein had told Hitler that rather than accept a solution the Czech army would overthrow Hodza and make a *coup d'état*. Göring suggested that then the Czechs would ask Runciman to go and might murder Henlein. All his remarks (sometimes wild) were that Germany would not be the aggressor.

Goebbels said that the Benes proposals of 2 days ago were quite unacceptable but neither he nor Göring took such a serious view as Ribbentrop's staff.

Göring said that Hitler had said to him 'If I can settle the Sudeten question with Britain the British will be surprised at the moderation of my suggestions for an Anglo-German understanding'.

Göring also tried to impress me with the strength of the German economic as well as military position. But he certainly does not contemplate war this month, and he is the frankest of the lot.

I believe Hitler will say on Monday: 'If Runciman cannot find a solution at Prague acceptable to the Sudeten, then I shall have to.'

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

(621/25/38)

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *September 13, 1938*

Dear Secretary of State,

I shall not forget Nuremberg 1938 in a hurry.

I arrived there in the morning of September 7th and attended the march past of the Labour Service youth (eighteen and twenty years old) with their spades. In my opinion the finest thing in the whole of the Nazi régime.

I saw a certain number of people at the march past but the only one I had much talk with was Göring. He told me that there were only 40,000 of the Labour Corps present because so many were now employed on the Western front fortifications.

In the afternoon the whole Diplomatic Corps was received by Hitler. He was in quite good form and made himself generally agreeable, except to the Czech Minister with whom he just shook hands and no more. Most of my conversation with him was about the Labour Corps. He told me that he got the idea of it from Bulgaria! That was not boasting but a good deal of his conversation was. He said that he could keep his arm stretched out for hours at a time by pure will-power.

He resolutely kept off politics in every form. Not that I could have discussed them seriously with him, as my diplomatic colleagues did not give me a chance to be alone with him. The French Ambassador did try by saying that he hoped the Chancellor could give him a favourable forecast. Hitler's reply was, 'What about? The weather? The weather forecast is always wrong.'

Before the reception Ribbentrop gave us lunch in our train, with a bevy of German Ambassadors, Welczek from Paris, Moltke from Warsaw, Diekhoff from Washington, Thiermann from Buenos Aires, Stöhrer from Burgos and von Dirksen. I sat next the latter and spoke my mind to him. He was unhappy and had not seen Hitler since he left London. He said that he was going back there next week but would not leave without seeing the Führer, but I do not feel at all sure that he will get the chance.

The next morning (September 8th) . . .<sup>1</sup> came to see me almost in a state of collapse. He has many contacts, is a rabid pro-German and has always been in close touch with Ribbentrop. He is 'off' the latter now. According to . . .<sup>1</sup> Hitler has become quite mad and is bent on war at all costs. I told him that I had heard that for months past and that without knowing his authorities, such information was valueless to me. After much hesitation he quoted them under a vow of secrecy, but though of a certain standing they are none intimates of Hitler's. Nevertheless the theory is widespread and there is no smoke without some fire and the borderline is not a wide one in Hitler's case.

. . .<sup>2</sup> also said that Germany, according to his informants, had not insisted on a plebiscite, because Hitler now wanted more, i.e. Prague. In my subsequent conversation with Göring the latter referred to a plebiscite as if Germany would jump at the offer. I do not believe anyone really knows what is in Hitler's mind: possibly not even himself—yet.

In the afternoon I went out to see Göring. For about an hour the conversation was pretty hostile on both sides. I spoke very plainly to him and he retorted on the lines of his subsequent speech: Germany's war readiness, bursting corn-bins,

<sup>1</sup> A name is omitted here.

air superiority, military defences, etc., etc. But he did assure me that a peaceful solution would be preferred, that there would be no aggression against Czechoslovakia (I warned him against put-up jobs, etc.) and he gave me the definite impression that there was no time limit and that Hitler would not immediately prejudice the position in his speech.

Afterwards he drove me out to Veldenstein, the old fortress where he lived as a boy, and the rest of the afternoon was amicable, planning a shooting visit to Rominten at the end of September, etc. He said that he hoped to goodness the Czechs wouldn't upset his shooting plans by starting trouble in the middle of them. I don't think he was trying to fool me. He spoke appreciatively of Lord Runciman on the strength of what Henlein had told Hitler at Berchtesgaden. I asked him, speaking personally, whether he would see any utility in Lord Runciman seeing Hitler, but he didn't seem enthusiastic and I didn't argue.

I have reported most of his other remarks officially. I urged Anglo-German co-operation in a Sudeten settlement and he said, among other things, that Hitler had recently remarked to him that if only that question was out of the light he would make us a 'good offer'.

I saw Ribbentrop on the morning of September 9th and Weizsäcker afterwards. Ribbentrop was less unreasonable than I expected and said he was studying the latest Benes proposals. Weizsäcker was very uneasy and worried, and one noteworthy fact at Nuremberg was the extreme uneasiness of all the Ministry for Foreign Affairs officials. Partly dislike of Ribbentrop, partly I imagine the instructions they may have had to telegraph to their Missions abroad and partly all sorts of other causes.

I lunched with Hess afterwards and sat between General von Epp, the Colony protagonist, and Ley, the Labour Minister. I spoke to all of them my set pieces. After lunch I buttonholed Goebbels and did the same. He did not give me the impression of being a fire-eater. He is the cleverest of the lot and the one with whom one can best argue a point because he sees it, which so many of the Nazi Germans or most Germans cannot. He professed personally to be quite favourable to the idea of a reference to Anglo-German co-operation in Hitler's speech. His main anxiety seemed to be for British pressure at Prague lest things get out of hand. He appeared to me anxious and I begin to doubt whether he is egging Hitler on to extremes. He strengthened this impression when I talked to him on two subsequent occasions. I sat next him at Himmler's S.S. camp supper and at the S.A. and S.S. march past on the Sunday he made a point of coming over and sitting beside me and telling me that, contrary to what everybody believed in England, he was not only not anti-British but a firm believer in Anglo-German co-operation. I expressed the pious hope that he show this belief in his acts and writings. He is more inclined by temperament to throwing dust in the eyes than Göring.

After lunch I called on Neurath who only arrived that day. He said that he had not seen Hitler and would not be seeing him. This unwillingness on the part of Hitler to see any of his more moderate advisers, von Dirksen and Neurath in particular, is one of the most disquieting symptoms. I explained the British position carefully to Neurath who, I knew, could be counted upon to lobby it with all and sundry. He, like everybody I met, extreme or moderate, was very insistent against a repetition of May 21st, as the one straw which might break the camel's back. If Hitler will now not believe that we shall fight Germany in certain circumstances, then nothing will make him believe it. He has been told it publicly in March and in May and in August. No one can blame us this time for not having

issued categorical warnings. To say again at Nuremberg what we have said in public three times, would not add anything to our previous statements. What I felt so strongly about your instructions to me was that it would be better to wait for a repetition, if it became necessary, until after and not before the speech, particularly as my clear impression from Göring and Goebbels as well as from Neurath and others was that Hitler would burn no bridges for good and all in that speech.

Another thing I felt was that if Hitler has definitely decided on war it means that he has crossed the borderline of insanity and that no warning will serve any purpose. Being not convinced that he has yet crossed it, I felt it was better to give him a chance to leave a door open.

I am grateful for your confidence in—as I know you must have done—urging agreement not to instruct me to make it. My conscience is clear on that point though I suppose one will never know whether I was right or wrong, any more than one will know what effect the Prime Minister's statement to the journalists<sup>2</sup> on the 11th really had. I was sorry that it had been made before, instead of after, the speech, but Heaven alone knows whether it had a useful effect or otherwise.

The poor messenger by air from London had a rotten time, for life is not comfortable at Nuremberg and the train in which the diplomats live a nightmare. I hope the scraps of paper on which I wrote to Horace Wilson were legible. Most of them were torn from books!

On Saturday the 10th I watched Hitler swear in his Youth, boys of seventeen and eighteen. Even at that spectacle of boys and girls, it was impossible for Hitler to relax his tension. His hands were clenching all the time and he hardly smiled once. Of course the Nuremberg Festival is a trying one and an immense effort for the man but he is obviously keyed up to a pitch where anything might happen. His physical endurance is marvellous. For five hours he stood in a car, nearly all the time with his arm stretched out and with no hat on in a glaring sun on Sunday while his S.A. and S.S. troops marched past. I couldn't have done it even twenty years ago.

The 10th was an anxious day for me especially when I heard in the morning that the 'Daily Mail' and others had already announced that I had been instructed to give a warning to Hitler at Nuremberg. Ward Price telephoned to that effect. I happened to see Weizsäcker later and he was greatly upset. However I was able to tell him that the Foreign Office had issued a *démenti*. Nevertheless I remained unhappy as if I had had to make the communication the fact that it had been announced in the British press before it was even made to the German Government would have made things even worse. It was with all the more relief that I heard about 7 p.m. that the Cabinet had agreed to suspend the note. In the meantime I had worked out an alternative suggestion which I sent you by telegram<sup>3</sup> yesterday on the chance that something of the sort may come in useful later. I don't really feel like going to extremities until they seem absolutely necessary.

It poured with rain all Saturday so that supper in the S.S. camp with Himmler was not very inspiring. I reserve judgment about Himmler. He is a friend of Ribbentrop, which in itself makes one believe in his extremism, but one hears of other sides to him. Unfortunately I did not get an opportunity to talk politics. He was however very friendly as were all the Germans at Nuremberg with me. Were they thinking to pull wool over my eyes, to detach Great Britain from interference in Czechoslovakia? Anyway I spent a great deal of my time even

<sup>2</sup> See No. 837, note 1, and Appendix III.

<sup>3</sup> No. 839.

with the humblest replying to the constant resentful enquiries as to why we were butting in and what interests England had there? Very few really could understand that it was exactly because we had no interests there and could therefore best keep the peace that we were playing the ungrateful role of honest broker.

Incidentally I met for the first time the notorious Unity Mitford at Himmler's party. A lady introduced me and when she squeaked out 'Heil Hitler' to me, I was so dumbfounded that I forgot my usual retort which is 'Rule Britannia'. Except to shake her by the hand I didn't speak to her.

My last day was the Sunday (11th) when I went with the rest of the Corps Diplomatic to watch the march past of the S.A. and S.S. formations (120,000). It lasted from 11.30 to 4.30 p.m. We only witnessed the first hour and then were released, but after lunch I went back without my colleagues about 3.30 and found Hitler still standing there and saluting! I found myself in the middle of all the little Austrian girls who had been sent up there for the first time. They said they had been having the time of their lives. Some of them were good-looking.

My last experience was a final dinner in the train with the officials of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (*sans* Ribbentrop). Some of them talked a lot of treason to my colleagues. Weizsäcker telephoned a message that he would come earlier to have a talk. He was blackly pessimistic and convinced that a plebiscite was now the only issue. I asked him if anything could convince Hitler of the reality of our warnings. Weizsäcker's only answer was that nothing must be omitted. He was and has always been just as much opposed as the others to any public repetition of May 21st; but I know that the idea of a private letter of the Prime Minister's to Hitler would appeal to him. But it must be kept secret.

I was glad to get to Berlin and a bath. The discomforts of the diplomatic train are inconceivable.

Yrs. ever,  
NEVILLE HENDERSON

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *September 20, 1938*

Dear Secretary of State,

Hateful though it is to give in to these wolves, I have no doubts in my own conscience that His Majesty's Government were bound to decide for self-determination on the merits of the case itself, quite apart from the merits of the parties involved, about which I should not like to have to choose.

I'm afraid that Benes will not make the best of a thoroughly bad job. Yet if he would bow to 'force majeure' how much better it would be for him. He would win everybody's sympathy and save much from the wreck. But he has been so short-sighted in the past that one cannot hope that he will be more far-sighted now. If he is not, we are far from being out of the wood. His best course would be, as I remember in one of Newton's telegrams he threatened to do, to make terms direct with Hitler on the ground that he had been deserted by the West, on which he counted.

I hope there will be no hitch to prevent the Prime Minister coming to Godesberg on Wednesday. I don't understand why the proposal for that day has not been confirmed but fear to say too much by telegram lest I may run counter to your plans. Yet I regard delay as dangerous as both Czechs and Sudeten may go to extremes and I would rather the two great men were together to deal with the

situation which may arise in consequence. Though I cling to the belief that Hitler will hold his hand as long as he can and as he promised to do, my confidence is far from unlimited either that he can or he will.

It's a sorry business but I would rather have local trouble between Czechs and Germans than a world war and that was the issue. It may be humiliating but it's better to keep the peace for a principle than to fight a war in opposition to one. And I have no doubt whatever of the rightness of the principle pure and simple. Anyway now that we have taken the plunge for self-determination, we have got to see it through, and, if Benes is reasonable, do the best we can for him.

Simple delimitation would be infinitely the best method wherever possible. It could be done gradually beginning with the Egerland and spread over say six months: two international bodies, one to arrange for transfer of population and the other to keep the peace in the doubtful areas: the immediate return of refugees to their homes: the Poles and Hungarians told to keep quiet till the Sudeten problem is solved: and plebiscites only where absolutely necessary. It will all be very complicated and the jingling of the guinea will have where possible to cure the hurt which honour feels.

I cannot stop the German press roarings. Weizsäcker, to whom I spoke again this morning, tells me that it is run from Berchtesgaden so that, if anything is to be done, it can best be done at Godesberg if the Prime Minister and Hitler meet there. It is the same with the German army: just as the press will go on roaring, so the army will go on threatening until it is quite certain that the Czechs do not mean to fight. So long as that possibility exists, no arguments with the Germans have any prospect of being listened to.

What will now be Lord Runciman's position? His indispensability in the scheme of things has been obvious and still more so if he can be persuaded to come out with the definite pronouncement (which seems to me obvious) that the maintenance of the Sudeten under Czech rule had become utterly impossible. But now I do not see how he fits in at all in the scheme as put forward. I must say that I always realised that if there was no Runciman plan before Nuremberg, our initiative would be lost to Hitler.

If we escape war, revision will be the order of the day for the next few years and the wisest countries will be those that, avoiding Benes' mistakes, take the bull by the horns and bilaterally settle their affairs by mutual agreement.

Work for diplomats! I take off my hat to you and the Prime Minister for, by Heaven, I know how tired I am of this business and of dealing with these people. Even you and the Prime Minister do not have the intolerable personal contacts which are my lot.

One is now waiting to hear when the Prime Minister will come to Godesberg and the nature of Benes' reply. Prevarication at least, I fear, if it is not open defiance. Much depends on how straight the French or we talk to him, for it is clear or was so in the last forty-eight hours, that he still clings to the hope of dragging us all down in his own ruin. Folly or resentment, perhaps both.

Yours ever,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

<sup>1</sup> A reference to a statement made to Sir N. Henderson is here omitted.



## APPENDIX II

### Additional Correspondence on Lord Runciman's Mission

- I. Conversations with Herr Henlein.
- II. Memorandum on the Sudeten German Question and Lord Runciman's Mission.
- III. Additional letters on the Progress of the Negotiations.
- IV. Letter from Viscount Runciman to President Benes.

#### I

##### CONVERSATIONS WITH HERR HENLEIN

##### *I. Note of a Conversation between Viscount Runciman and Herr Henlein<sup>1</sup> on August 18*

[C 8851/1941/18]

LORD RUNCIMAN'S MISSION, PRAGUE, August 19, 1938

Herr Henlein had a long conversation with Lord Runciman on August 18 (Prince Max von Hohenlohe and myself interpreting). Herr Henlein set forth his point of view which is well known, on the political and economic situation of his people, and which has led to the demands formulated in the Karlsbad speech.

The German people in Czechoslovakia, he said, must defend their homes and livelihood and the future of their children against a formidable Czech invasion which is promoted and assisted by the Government. The Government which should give them protection is the enemy of his people. The only remedy therefore is the greatest possible separation of the Czech and the German people. He had the alternative of two policies: (a) to negotiate a settlement, or (b) to demand a plebiscite. He would greatly prefer the former, and he would continue the present negotiations so long as he could. He had always urged moderation on his people, and he believed he had kept them in hand to a remarkable extent and under great provocation. But he was afraid that time was running out, and that if he had nothing to show to his people, they would become disillusioned and throw him over. He was anxious at the effect of the return of 10,000 men now finding temporary work in Germany but soon to return to swell the ranks of the unemployed during the winter.

Herr Henlein did not think much of Dr. Hodza's letter offering seven posts to Germans, 'when they have taken 50,000 posts away from us'. But we got him to admit grudgingly that the offer had some value as a first step, and also as a sign that the Government were prepared to take action as a sign of their goodwill to Lord Runciman's Mission.

He did not object to the publication of Dr. Hodza's letter, but he warned us that we must not expect any applause from his people. He said that the Government should make a gesture, but that it should be a gesture on a wide scale, e.g. the publication of a decree that the Government intend: (a) to appoint German

<sup>1</sup> See No. 652. The conversation took place at Schloss Rotenhaus, the home of Prince Max von Hohenlohe. These notes were made by Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin. They were received at the Foreign Office on August 23.

officials only in the German districts, and (b) to bring back German officials now in Czech districts to serve in German districts henceforward.

Herr Henlein added that the State police should be recalled at once; these police were regarded not as giving protection to his people, but as being there to injure them.

The best, therefore, that we got out of Herr Henlein at this first meeting was:

(a) the statement that he intends to proceed by way of negotiation with the Czech Government;

(b) that he is definitely for peace, since war would fall with immediate impact on the Sudeten German country;

(c) that he is determined to hold his people in order in spite of provocation if he can;

(d) that he is not absolutely pledged to the terms of the Karlsbad speech; or rather, that those terms were definitely left vague in some respects so as to allow room for compromise;

(e) that he has no wish to break up the State frontiers of the Czechoslovak Republic; but rather to obtain a large degree of home rule for his people within those frontiers.

F. A.-G.

2. *Note of a Conversation between Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin and Herr Henlein at Marienbad on August 22<sup>1</sup>*

[C 8851/1941/18]

LORD RUNCIMAN'S MISSION, PRAGUE, August 23, 1938

I had a long talk with Henlein. He says there are five alternatives:—

1. Things to continue as they are—*unmöglich!*
2. Grant of local autonomy on the lines he has proposed.
3. Detachment from Czechoslovakia—a new independent State.
4. Anschluss to Germany of the Sudeten German districts.
5. Incorporation into Germany of the whole of Bohemia and Moravia.

Of these alternatives he vastly preferred No. 2. He was prepared to negotiate for this with the Czech Government.

We discussed the new outline of a settlement which has reached his party through an indirect channel (Dr. Sander, Rector of the German University in Prague, gave it to Kundt) allegedly from President Benes. It consists (so I am told) of the following points:—

1. Three local autonomous districts in Sudeten German land.
2. Exchange of officials, i.e. Czech officials in German lands to be removed, German officials in Czech lands to be restored to German lands, to begin at once.
3. Independent budget for the 3 districts.
4. Loan from Central Government to the 3 districts.
5. Commission to meet within 1 to 3 months to decide on necessary changes in the constitution.
6. Propaganda and Press armistice.
7. Withdrawal of State police from German districts if all goes quietly.

Henlein asked whether this were not the President's effort to torpedo the Runciman Mission. I said that if so, never torpedo more welcome to the torpedoed.

<sup>1</sup> See No. 674. These notes were received at the Foreign Office on August 23.

Henlein said he would be prepared to negotiate at once on this basis; he did not think Berlin would make any difficulties. He thought that Germany would only move into Czechoslovakia if there were first disorders and bloodshed and Sudeten lives were lost. He was impressed by the growing fear of war in Germany.

He would be glad if Lord Runciman would see the President and ask if the proposals were authoritative.

He then gave me a paper on which were written his suggestions as to the steps which the Czech Government should take in order to produce a better atmosphere:—

1. Immediate withdrawal of the Czech State police and restoration of the local communal police.
2. Strict prohibition of the persecution of Sudeten Germans on account of their nationality and political activity.
3. Strict punishment of excesses by officials, military and police.
4. Prohibition of press violence and incitation of the Czech population living in German districts.
5. Immediate start with the transfer of German officials into German areas.
6. Immediate suspension of the unendurable press censorship.

It was clearly Herr Henlein's idea that we should recommend these suggestions to the Government.

I asked Henlein where the capital of his new State would be. He laughed and said he had not thought of that yet—perhaps Reichenberg, perhaps (more probably) Teplitz.

He denied with emphasis: (1) that he was a dictator; (2) that he had any sympathy whatever with the 'terror' of the German Nazis; (3) that he would ever permit any 'Judenhetze'; (4) that he aimed at political totalitarianism or anything other than honourable treatment of opponents and opposition so long as they dealt fairly with him. He believed that an honest opposition had useful functions of criticism.

He believed that his movement had not only political but social value in producing a new spirit of unity, self-help and helpfulness to others. This was his pride and reward and satisfaction in life. He had been through hard times in the war and in subsequent illness; he was not afraid of blame or praise, of life or of death. He did not seek power. Perhaps this was why his people believed in him and followed him implicitly; they would not so follow any of his lieutenants—not Kundt, or Frank. But he must not let his people down by accepting any terms which he thought inadequate for their needs.

I spoke to Henlein about the peace of Europe, saying that it had so come about that the question of Sudetenland was not only a question in itself but a part of the problem of peace in Europe. He said, Yes; there are two questions: (1) the relations between the Czechs and the Sudeten Germans and (2) the relations between Czechoslovakia and Germany. I said there was a third (3) the establishment of friendly relations between Germany and the rest of the world, especially with England and France.

He said that he had always wished to see England and Germany friends. He thought (though this must never be quoted) that England was a much more suitable friend than Italy.

I said to him that if he really believed this, and if he was satisfied with our fair and friendly demeanour as regards Lord Runciman's Mission, and if a beginning of peace were made by the starting of negotiations with the Czech Government on

a sound basis, then would he himself go to Germany and tell Hitler what his experience had been, and that he believes England desires a settlement and that he believes this would be Germany's best way? If he would be prepared to do this, I said that I would consult His Majesty's Government. If they approve I would let him know, say, within a week. He said that he would be willing to go specially to Germany for the purpose.

But if he goes, we must be prepared to follow this up very quickly by direct approach to Hitler—so that when he makes his speech at Nuremberg, it will be a peace speech and not a war speech.

I also discussed with him the possibility of introducing an international police into the Sudeten area to replace (for a time) the Czech State police, if they were withdrawn—something analogous to the international force in the Saar land. He approved of this idea, and thought it worth pursuing, nor did he think Germany would object if she were fully consulted.

I made it quite clear to Herr Henlein throughout that I was talking as a private individual and not with any kind of official authority.

F. A.-G.

### *3. Notes of a Conversation between Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin and Herr Henlein<sup>1</sup> on September 4*

LORD RUNCIMAN'S MISSION, PRAGUE, September 4, 1938

I saw Herr Henlein this morning, September 4th, in his house at Asch.

He told me that he had arrived at Berchtesgaden on Thursday about midday, and had seen Hitler alone for a short time in the course of the afternoon. He gave Hitler the two messages in writing. Hitler put on his spectacles and read them attentively and said he would discuss them the next day.

Göring had left Berchtesgaden that morning. Goebbels was there but was not present at the interview.

The next morning, Friday, Herr Henlein had a second interview with Hitler, at which Ribbentrop was present, but did not say anything. Hitler's manner was calm and friendly, and he seemed in good health. He did not discuss Anglo-German relations. He accepted Herr Henlein's commendation of the work of Lord Runciman's Mission without enthusiasm but without contradiction. He asked Herr Henlein what his policy was. Herr Henlein said first of all that he wanted no war, and that war would ruin his people's country from both sides. Herr Hitler said 'I do not want war' (*Ich will keinen Krieg*). Herr Henlein said that there were two policies for him: (a) autonomy within the Czechoslovak State to be attained through negotiation; (b) plebiscite, which means Anschluss with the Reich. In either case he wished to obtain his results in a peaceable way and to this Herr Hitler fully assented.

Henlein said that he preferred policy (a) and hoped to attain his results thereby. Hitler expressed great scepticism of any really satisfactory results coming from negotiations with the Czech Government and notably with M. Benes.

Henlein then had lunch with Hitler and Ribbentrop and afterwards left for Asch, arriving about 7.30 on Friday evening.

Henlein was in a very cheerful mood, and clearly relieved at the result of his visit. I attached as much importance to this as to anything he told me, especially

<sup>1</sup> See No. 765.

when he asked me not to impart too rosy an account of it to the Czech authorities as it might encourage them to resist his requests. Herr Henlein seemed quite convinced of Hitler's pacific intentions.

I asked him twice whether Herr Hitler had fixed or suggested any date by which results must be obtained. He said 'No'. I learned from Henlein that the Party was going to hold its own great Parteitag for the first time about October 15th or 16th at Boehmisch-Leipa, before the anniversary of the Czechoslovak Republic on October 28th. It would be necessary for him to make a big speech at the Parteitag and be able to announce that all had been satisfactorily arranged. He said that the most urgent question was the Police. If the Stadt Polizei could be withdrawn before the SdP Parteitag this would make all the difference.

If we were to talk about dates he thought that the date before which agreement should be reached should be the end of September.

Afterwards Prince Max told me that the Parteitag idea was a new one; it had arisen since the return from Berchtesgaden and probably under direct influence from there.

On Sunday 25th September a big harvest thanksgiving festival will be held at Leitmeritz. Henlein and Frank will both speak, but they will make an effort not to be too political. Frank asked whether it might be possible for the State Police to be withdrawn from Leitmeritz for this occasion. If they were withdrawn he was certain that order could and would be maintained, and it would be a very definite sign and expression of the intentions of the Czechoslovak Government.

F. A.-G.

## II

### MEMORANDUM BY MR. ASHTON-GWATKIN ON THE SUDETEN GERMAN QUESTION AND THE RUNCIMAN MISSION<sup>1</sup>

[C 8955/1941/18]

LORD RUNCIMAN'S MISSION, PRAGUE, *August 24, 1938*

#### I. *Present Position.*

[Not printed.<sup>2</sup>]

#### II. *Future Developments.*

The future development of the situation in and around Lord Runciman's Mission may be suggested under the same three headings as follows:—

##### 1. *Constitutional.*

If all goes well, *the new Benes negotiations* should advance rapidly and reach something very like agreement on main principles within the next ten days; this should be followed by an immediate gesture by the Government in the form of replacement of officials.

If all does not go well, Lord Runciman may have to intervene with advice to the two parties and even with fresh suggestions.

The *importance of the State police* can hardly be exaggerated in this Sudeten German question. They are a constant irritation to the Sudeten Germans; and yet they can hardly be withdrawn without (in present circumstances) serious danger to the Czech Government.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin returned with this memorandum to London on August 24 for consultations.

<sup>2</sup> The first part of this memorandum is summarized very fully in No. 696.

It should be considered whether it might not be possible to police the Sudeten German lands—for a temporary period and of course through international agreement—with an *international force* on the model of the Saar arrangements.

This should give assurance to the Czechs and Sudeten Germans alike—to the former that they will not be attacked from outside, and to the latter that Czech promises will be carried out.

It would also make it possible for the Czech Government to moderate the intensive military defence measures which are now being taken all along the frontier and are gravely disquieting the people; also the severe and very unpopular control now being exercised through the National Defence Law.

### 2. *Political.*

The possibility should be borne in mind of a *neutralisation of Czechoslovakia* with or without guarantees from any Power to come to her assistance if, in spite of neutralisation, she is attacked. Czechoslovakia would however have to give up her present obligations to go to the help of France and the Soviet Union. The latter possibility is now, we know, under discussion between M. Benes and the Sudeten leaders.

A *Four (or Five) Power Conference*, to which possibly Germany may not be averse, might decide both on the neutralisation question and on the policing by an international force (see above).

Herr Henlein has offered his help and influence in Germany in assisting any immediate effort to improve Anglo-German relations, and, if asked, will go to Berlin forthwith for this purpose.

### 3. *Economic.*

Among M. Benes' latest proposals is one for a loan from the Central Government to the Sudeten districts—presumably to help relieve distress.

Outside help may be required in the form of a *loan* to Czechoslovakia to assist (1) *charitable relief* during the winter, and (2) a *public works programme*. This matter is urgent as economic distress this winter will add to political unrest, and will make it difficult for Henlein to control his people. He himself expects the dangerous time to begin in October, when men, at present earning good wages in Germany, return to their homes—and unemployment—to the number of some 10,000.

A minor step which foreign Powers should take to help the Czech Government through their difficulties is a *reduction of the rate of interest on the Czecho. Loan*.

The possibility of a *German-Czech Customs Union*, or *preferential Commercial Treaty*, though not at present suggested even in the Press, must not be excluded in this connexion.

F. A.-G.

## III

### ADDITIONAL LETTERS ON THE PROGRESS OF THE NEGOTIATIONS

#### *Letter from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin (Prague) to Mr. Strang*

LORD RUNCIMAN'S MISSION, PRAGUE, *August 16, 1938*

In continuation of my letter of August 9th,<sup>1</sup> our situation here is rather clearer, but that does not mean it is easier. We are coming to the end of our first

<sup>1</sup> No. 598.

preparatory period, documentary and personal. The Sudetendeutsch Party have taken us on—that is to say, they see a chance of getting what they want through our influence on the Czech Government and at present they would rather owe their deliverance to us than to Berlin. The danger of this is obvious—the danger of being increasingly identified with one party in the dispute.

When I last wrote, we had struck the first obstacle. The Sudetens were refusing to negotiate with the Parliamentary Committee of Six, whom the Government had appointed to negotiate with them. On August 10th Lord Runciman saw the President and urged him to take immediate unilateral action to admit more Germans into the civil service and local administrations; or at any rate to stop the intensive appointment of Czechs. Dr. Benes promised to do so, but I think he will have to be kept up to his promises, not once and again, but again and again. I lunched with some Czechs and met Dr. Meissner and Mr. Rasin of the Committee of Six. They were perturbed by the news that the Sudetens would not negotiate with them; and thought that they were holding off for prestige reasons, possibly under pressure from Berlin. In the evening we dined with some twenty-five of our Czech colleagues of the Government service at the Barrandov Restaurant just outside Prague; all very friendly and *gemütlich*. It went on till midnight. Lord Runciman and Peto had been dining *en petit comité* with Hodza and Krofta.

On Thursday (August 11th) the Sudeten Delegation came to see us in the morning in Lord Runciman's presence. Kundt told us that arrangements were being made for him to meet Henlein during the week-end. Lunch at H.M. Legation—various English and Czech people. In the afternoon we heard that the Sudetens had met the Czech negotiators in the Prime Minister's office. He had given them a Memorandum criticising their proposals (this is being sent you by the Legation); and arrangements had been made for the negotiations to continue next Tuesday.

On Friday (August 12th) we received the Hungarian Delegation. They left a long Memorandum which I have not studied yet; but it is obvious that if the Sudetens get their prize, the Hungarians will get theirs as well, though it will not satisfy them, for what they really want is to get back to Hungary. I met the German Councillor (Henke) at lunch at Troutbeck's, a nice fellow but unexpansive. He said that his Legation's instructions were to keep out of these negotiations absolutely. He wished us well, since a settlement he was sure would lead to peace. In the afternoon, Lord Runciman had a surprise visit from Frank. He saw him alone with Henderson who made a record which is being sent to you. Lord Runciman thought well of him. He said that Kundt and Co. had given him a very favourable report on us! In the evening, a large dinner in the State rooms of the Foreign Office, followed by a reception with admirable music (String quartet of Dvorak, followed by a brilliant young pianist named Firkusky). I spoke with Meissner who said that the 'Stimmung' at yesterday's meeting with the Sudetens had been bad; they had not opened up at all. Madame Bata, the boot queen, invited us all to Zlin.

Saturday (August 13th) a delegation of Sudetendeutsch industrialists, representing textiles, margarine, banking, and Sudeten industries explained at great length the tragic story of their decline and fall. Lunched with Lord and Lady Runciman to meet Lord Allen of Hurtwood and Mr. Catchpole (emissary of Quakers who has been distributing relief in the Sudeten areas). Left at 3 p.m. by car for Prince Kinsky's Jagdschloss (Balzhütte) near Boehmisch Kamnitz and the Saxon frontier.

The main road is half blocked with barricades of pine logs; soldiers are all over the place, putting up forts and machine gun embrasures, and wire entanglements.

Part of Prince Kinsky's forest is closed to him and to all comers, and in his house one has to fill up a 'feuille' giving one's full particulars as in a hotel.

On Sunday morning (August 14th) Prince Kinsky took Peto and myself round the countryside visiting some of the people so that we might see their plight—see Peto's notes sent separately. We also saw the Bürgermeister of Kamnitz for an hour or more in the afternoon. Then I had the talk with Prince Max von Hohenlohe, recorded separately. While this was going on, shouting started from the Park gates. *Lord Runciman wollen wir sehen!* He and Lady Runciman and others walked down to the gates where they had an enthusiastic reception—country people mostly women and children, about 150. *Wir bitten um Hilfe für unsere Not! Geben Sie uns, Lord Runciman, eine gerechte Lösung.*

The Lord (as he is always called here) has made a considerable and I believe favourable impression.

We returned on Monday (August 15th)—myself in the morning, the others in the afternoon.

Tomorrow afternoon I shall be seeing Malypetr and Meissner of the Committee of Six.

*Letter from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin (Prague) to Mr. Strang*

[C 8909/1941/18]

LORD RUNCIMAN'S MISSION, PRAGUE, August 23, 1938

This has been an increasingly active week. Our routine job has been the study of the Czech proposals in a series of meetings—August 16th, 17th, 19th (two), 20th, 22nd at the house of Dr. Meissner (a former Minister of Justice) with members of the Parliamentary Committee of Six, who were to have negotiated with the Sudetens. The members discussing these documents with us have been Messrs. Meissner, Malypetr, Rasin and Klapka, also Dr. Heidrich, legal adviser to the Foreign Office.

It is stodgy work, but Dr. Meissner, a solemn little bearded man (one of the authors of the Constitution, for which he has an exaggerated respect) feeds us with sandwiches in the morning and delicious cakes in the afternoon.

But beyond this much has been happening.

On August 16th and 17th, there was very nearly a breakdown of the Government's negotiations with the Sudetens but this was turned into a postponement in circumstances already reported to you.<sup>1</sup>

On August 18th first meeting with Henlein at Prince Max von Hohenlohe's Schloss. This is reported separately, also our intervention in the troubles at Brüx.<sup>2</sup> I learned later that this action confirmed the good opinion which the Sudeten leaders were beginning to have of us—an opinion which they have passed on to Germany; and it did us no harm with the Czechs.

On August 19th Lord Runciman saw Dr. Hodza and gave him our account of the Brüx affair. That evening I dined at the Legation; and I lunched there also next day (August 20th).

Lord and Lady Runciman and Peto had gone off to spend the weekend at Prince Adolf Schwarzenberg's in South Bohemia. Stopford and I motored to Reichenberg—to visit the Trade Fair (die Messe) next day. Instead of sleeping in Reichenberg, we went on to a small Kurort called Liebwerda, near the German border. In 1930, Liebwerda had had 2,500 Kurgäste; and even last year 1,200;

<sup>1</sup> See No. 629.

<sup>2</sup> See No. 713, note 3.



but this year, up to end of July, 124. On the hills round about soldiers are busy putting up defences, and most of the forest walks and some of the roads are closed. The Bürgermeister and local Parteileiter called on us to tell us about these and other things, mainly about the poverty of the people with the usual complaints about the Czech officials.

Next day (August 21) we went to the Reichenberg Trade Fair. We were met by our Consul, Mr. Pares, and then by the Bürgermeister, the officials of the fair, the Bezirkshauptmann (local Czech authority) and others. The population lined the street and we were received with Nazi salutations and Heils and Sieg Heils.

As I told Henlein next day, I had never felt so like Henlein before.

We spent two hours in the Fair, which was quite interesting—a miniature B.I.F.—this part of Czechoslovakia produces an immense range of products, but the principal things are textiles (Reichenberg), glass ware (Gablonz), porcelain (Carlsbad), machinery (Warnsdorf and elsewhere).

We were taken to see the valley of dead factories; Reichenberg yarns and textiles are very depressed (except Baron Liebieg's firm, the biggest, which is selling quite well to Germany); Gablonz glass has done well out of the U.S. trade treaty.

After coffee and cakes on the top of a very high hill overlooking the two cities (Reichenberg and Gablonz) we got away and were back in Prague about 7.30 p.m.

Next day (August 22nd) in reply to a sudden summons from Prince Max von Hohenlohe, I motored to Marienbad to see Henlein. My talk with him was extremely interesting; I have recorded it at length. I like him. He is, I am sure, an absolutely honest fellow.

Meanwhile, Dr. Hodza had been telephoning wildly for Prince Max. I came back to Prague with him and left him on the Prime Minister's doorstep. In about an hour, he (Max) came to the hotel and had some dinner in my room.

There are *two* new plans! A Benes plan and a Hodza plan; and Hodza has only just heard of the Benes plan, and we don't know yet whether Benes has heard of the Hodza plan! Complete confusion and tangle; and Hodza says he will resign if Kundt goes to see the President (as arranged for tomorrow) before he has seen him.

So, this morning Lord Runciman goes first to the President, then to Dr. Hodza, to find out what's what.

And we must get hold of Kundt!

F. ASHTON-GWATRIN

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON, *August 25, 1938*

(Postscript)

These confusions were cleared up next day (August 23rd). Lord R. saw President Benes at 11 a.m. The President confirmed to him that he was already in negotiation with Herr Kundt on the basis which I had discussed with Henlein on the day before, and which H. accepts. Lord R. gave him the list of 7 points; M. Benes agreed that they are correct. He did not explain why he had not communicated with Lord R. before; perhaps he wanted first to be sure that the Sudetens would accept the new basis. He said he would inform Lord R. of the future progress of the negotiations and if any further points were added to the list. Dr. Hodza had just been with him; so apparently they are acting together.

Herr Kundt called in the afternoon to see Lord R. on instructions which had reached him from Henlein either direct or through Prince Max. He was to have

seen President Benes that afternoon, but the meeting had been postponed, presumably because the President wanted further discussion with Dr. Hodza first. They will therefore meet tomorrow (August 24th) morning at 11—President Benes, Dr. Hodza, Kundt and Sebekowsky. They will discuss not only the question of Sudeten home rule, but also foreign relations, i.e. Soviet Treaty and relations with Germany.

The new basis had reached Herr Kundt and the other leaders on Thursday morning (August 18th). They had reached them through Professor Sander of the German University in Prague, a Professor of Constitutional Law, who had for long been in contact with the Sudetens but was not a member of the Party. Herr Kundt was rather dubious as to carrying on two sets of negotiations on the same subject with two different lots of negotiators at the same time. Also, he doubted whether Benes had the constitutional power to negotiate independently of his Government. He asked whether Lord R. desired (a) to take part in the negotiations, (b) to be kept informed of them. Lord R. replied that he certainly did not want either to take a personal part in the negotiations, nor to take the part of an arbitrator, deciding who was right or who was wrong on such and such a point. He would like to be kept informed (which Herr Kundt promised to do) and he would intervene to try to remove obstacles, if necessary.

Dr. Hodza dined with Lord and Lady R. in the evening. He confirmed his entire agreement with the President in this last effort to reach a solution. He believed that between them they could carry the Czech Parliament and public opinion. He was less confident about the Sudetens, whether they were willing, whether they would be allowed to agree. He seemed fully aware of the urgency of the situation, and of the unpleasant alternatives, if the negotiations fail. He said that the next ten days or so must be decisive.

In the afternoon (August 23rd) Stopford and Henderson and I had a further meeting with Dr. Meissner's committee. Our summary of the Czech Government proposals is now agreed and complete.

The next morning (August 24th) Lord R. received a deputation from the German Social Democratic Party who stated their case, mainly on the economic side of the question; they want a loan of £40 millions!

In the afternoon, after a final visit to the Legation, I left for London in a deluge of rain about 5 p.m. by aeroplane and arrived at Croydon about 9.45.

*Letter from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin (Prague) to Mr. Strang*

LORD RUNCIMAN'S MISSION, PRAGUE, August 29, 1938

In the postscript to my last letter I brought this record down to my arrival in London on August 24th.

What happened in London you know—the meeting in the Secretary of State's room and the two telegrams<sup>1</sup> which were despatched to Lord Runciman.

You also know Lord Runciman's reaction to those telegrams.

I have asked Stopford to write a note (which I enclose) on what happened at this end during my absence.

I got back at about 1.15 p.m. on Saturday August 27th. I told Lord Runciman at once about the very great anxiety regarding events of the next month and the belief held in many quarters that nothing would now avert an attack on Czechoslovakia except a clear warning to Germany that in a world war we would be

<sup>1</sup> Nos. 686–7.

against her. I told him that one of our difficulties was to get any such warning through to Hitler since our approaches were blockaded by von Ribbentrop. Hence our request to him.

He remained unconvinced that this was the right way of approach.

He went to see President Benes at once to transmit a warning about the general situation and the necessity of going to the limit and beyond in meeting the wishes of the Sudetens. The President appeared to be satisfied at the way his negotiations were going.

At about 6 p.m. (August 27th) we left for the castle of Prince Clary at Teplitz (where the first Holy Alliance was signed and the ghost of Metternich looked at us, I thought, rather contemptuously). After dinner I left with Prince and Princess Max von Hohenlohe for his own castle of Rothenhaus near Komotau; the others remained at Teplitz.

Next day (August 28th) I saw first Frank and then Henlein—with the result given in my telegram<sup>2</sup> of today. And then Henlein saw Lord Runciman—with results also given.

We left Rothenhaus about 6.30 p.m.

The situation is, I think, clearer since we now have direct access to Hitler's intentions; and we know that if he can have the prestige and satisfaction of having secured for the Sudetens a settlement on the Karlsbad 8 Point basis, *there will be peace*—at any rate for this year.

We are asked to depart so far from strict mediation as to support the full demands (in general terms though not in detail) of one side against the other. As this would not have been fair to Lord Runciman, I told Henlein that his proposal was one that must be put to His Majesty's Government rather than to the Lord.

As 'general basis of a solution' the Karlsbad points are not clear. From our point of view, they are, I think, unobjectionable; to the Czechs they are disagreeable, but since the Czechs must in the end give way, they should not strain at the Karlsbad gnats after swallowing the Home Rule camel.

The difficult points in the Karlsbad programme are, according to Herr Frank:—

(1) The 'Volksgruppe'.

(2) 'Rechtspersönlichkeit.'

Both these conceptions are to me very obscure. The main difficulty about the 'Volksgruppe' appears to be that of making provision for the Germans scattered about in Czechoslovakia outside their Home Rule area.

To these two I would be inclined to add:—

(3) Reparations.

(4) Delimitation of the Home Rule area; the Sudetens want geographical continuity, the Czechs are offering three *separate* counties.

Incidentally, Henlein said that he would not insist on the Czech Government accepting the Karlsbad points under that name, so long as they accepted a programme which he could honestly explain to his people as being tantamount to the Karlsbad points.

So, to sum up the situation:—

1. Hitler lost prestige seriously on May 21st.
2. He has to restore that prestige by announcing that his Sudeten brethren have recovered their freedom on their own terms (Karlsbad) and thanks to his protection.

<sup>2</sup> No. 706.

3. He thought that the Runciman Mission was sent to delay settlement and play for time.
4. He therefore started sabre-rattling in order to frighten the Czechs (and the rest of the world) into accepting his solution; in this he is succeeding very well.
5. He did not, and does not, intend to make war; but a serious incident in Czechoslovakia might compel him to intervene.
6. This danger increases with every day that passes; and that is one reason why Hitler demands a *quick* settlement.
7. Meanwhile, the Sudeten Germans have reported that Lord Runciman is not playing for time and is not unfavourably disposed to their demands, and may be used as a lever to increase pressure on the Czechs.
8. Hitler would welcome this, if it is so, which he still doubts; he has therefore put this request to us through Henlein, in order to find out for certain.

F. ASHTON-GWATKIN

#### ENCLOSURE

*Note by Mr. Stopford*

LORD RUNCIMAN'S MISSION, PRAGUE, *August 29, 1938*

On the evening of Wednesday (24th) Peto, Henderson and I went to the Sudeten Bier-Abend, which was held in the Club of the Sudeten Members of Parliament. The Sudeten Delegation were our hosts, together with Frank and the Editor of 'Die Zeit'. The ice was broken by alternate drinks of beer and neat brandy; and even Frank, who had been very formal at first, thawed under the influence of this mixture. The evening was purely social (except for a conversation which I had with Kundt and which has already been reported)<sup>1</sup> and ended on a very friendly note.

On Thursday 25th the Staff saw the Delegation of 'Die Tat' Club (young Liberal Democrats and Social Democrats) and then Lord Runciman and the Staff received Dr. Wolf, representing the Polish Minority, who presented a Memorandum and explained their grievances. At 3.30 the Hungarian Delegation explained their second Memorandum and invited us to visit Bratislava. In private conversation they expressed their fears that they would not be as well treated as the Sudetens in any settlement.

At 5.15 Smutny, the *Chef du Protocol*, came to see Lord Runciman with a message from the President with regard to the progress made in the negotiations (reported by telegram).

In the evening Lord and Lady Runciman and the Hendersons attended a big dinner given by Madame Havrankova, at which most of the members of the Cabinet were present. Peto and I dined with Count Schönborn to meet Necas, the Minister for Social Affairs.

On Friday 26th there was a delegation of SdP. Trade Unionists who gave details of the unemployment situation, and particularly of the 'Czechization' of clerks and workmen.

At 2.30 Lord Runciman and I went to the Legation and discussed with Newton the situation arising out of the Secretary of State's telegram, which had been received in the morning. The answer was dispatched about 6 o'clock.<sup>2</sup>

In the evening Lord and Lady Runciman went to the opening night of the Czech Opera to hear the 'Bartered Bride'.

R. J. STOPFORD

<sup>1</sup> No. 681.

<sup>2</sup> No. 695.

*Letter from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin to Mr. Strang*

LORD RUNCIMAN'S MISSION, PRAGUE, *September 6, 1938*

My last letter closed on Monday August 29th. This last week has probably been the most critical in our enterprise. It is over—and I think satisfactorily over—though, at the moment of writing, the event is still far from clear.

On Monday August 29th we had what will probably be our last meeting with Dr. Meissner's Committee. These meetings have been based on the old proposals; whereas negotiations are now on the Benes-Kundt proposals. Lord Runciman visited Benes this evening—the first of a series of almost daily visits throughout this week, the purpose of which has been to keep him up to the scratch. He gave Lord Runciman the document in which he had formulated his new proposals, (the Seven Points); we were rather disappointed; it seemed too academic and likely to delay rather than advance matters.

Stopford and I dined with the Swiss Minister to meet Count von Bost-Waldeck, and discussed with him (up to 1 a.m.) a plan for a double parliament in the 'Land Tag', and corresponding system in the 'Bezirke', which is not unlike Stopford's own plan.

Tuesday (August 30th) was relatively quiet; Stopford produced his new Constitution—a really brilliant effort. It is to be kept in reserve in case we are called up to produce something.

Wednesday (August 31st). Left about 8.30 a.m. for Marienbad. Two hours talk with Henlein—in Carlton Hotel, mostly in Prince Max's presence. He was disappointed that we will not back absolutely and exclusively his Eight Carlsbad points. But he will go—he is anxious to go—he will start to-night if necessary—for Germany. But it must be strictly at our request; he does not want to be accused of taking orders from Hitler. His two messages were most carefully translated and typed for him.

Back in Prague about 7. Dined with M. and Madame Kruliš-Randa (he is a coal magnate) to meet other industrial and financial magnates—all rather sumptuous; good music—Firkusky playing Chopin etc.

Thursday (September 1st). F.O. are agitating about publication of Benes' proposals; we are far from keen on doing this; as in Germany and Sudeten Germany they would be received with derision. Visit from M. Bata—'just a shoemaker'; I advised him to stick to his last as he has been making lately 'no surrender' speeches. He gave me two hours lecture on his scheme of developing Czechoslovakia by improved transport.

Lunch at H.M. Legation. Dinner with Dr. Jaroslav Preiss (an objective Czech, which is not usual: head of the Zivnostenska Bank) in his super-log-cabin in the country South of Prague.

Friday, September 2nd. David Stephens arrived and joined our staff; I am sure he can be helpful. There's lots that ought to be done but which we have no time for, e.g. the economic side. This morning there was a critical meeting between Benes and Kundt lasting until 2.30. Lord Runciman saw President at 4. Kundt came to us at 6.30 with copy of his reply to President; and stayed with us until 12 (midnight)! Agreement is well within reach on everything except 'Selbstverwaltung'—which is all important.

Saturday September 3rd. Newton saw Benes this morning, Lord Runciman in the afternoon; and the French Minister saw him yesterday (I think)—all to tell him that he must do more and more and more to meet the Sudetens.

This morning I saw Malik (from the National Bank) and Weininger about clearing balances; and then the French Minister (de Lacroix). Lunch and tea with Newton. Left at 6.15 for Schloss Rotenhaus (Prince Max von Hohenlohe); he has heard that Henlein will be back this evening.

I missed with regret (a) accompanying Lord Runciman to stay with the Cardinal-Archbishop of Prague; (b) Dinner with Swiss Minister to meet Colonel and Mrs. Lindbergh. Later I learned that Kundt had seen Hodza on Saturday and discussed a new basis for negotiations.

Sunday September 4th. Left Schloss Rotenhaus at 7.30 a.m. with Prince Max von Hohenlohe in his car. Reached Asch about 10. We let Frank, whom we had met at Eger, go ahead of us. Henlein lives in a small 'kleinbürgerliches' house, small strip of garden, two Alsatian dogs in a wire pen. Downstairs rooms seemed mainly to consist of offices for the personal staff—6 or 7—gray uniforms, high black boots, clean, decent-looking fellows. Large bust of Henlein in corner of office with small plaque of Hitler hanging on the wall above it. After about 20 minutes wait, went upstairs to a very friendly greeting from Henlein, who although he had not recovered from his cold, was in a very good mood, laughing and joking, and clearly very pleased at the outcome of his mission. All this seems to me a very good augury, and at least as important as his actual words—see my report.

He said that Hitler had been very friendly and he had talked a lot about matters outside politics. He had taken Henlein to see his farm; and when they got to the cow-sheds, he said 'Und hier sind die Vertreterinnen des national-sozialistischen Kuhverbandes.' So the Führer has his lighter moments.

I was introduced to Frau Henlein. She is a lady of consequence since she is the daughter of a prosperous butcher of Asch, and I think the house belongs to her. Henlein himself comes from Reichenau near Reichenberg. I also shook hands with his little boy and his old mother whom I duly congratulated on her famous son.

He lives in a simplicity that is quite unostentatious—bookcases, some plaster reproductions of Greek heads and statuettes, a stern steel-helmeted head over the mantelpiece, no pictures—clean, comfortable, orderly; village schoolmaster sort of dwelling. No self-consciousness of any kind on Henlein's part. I do not think he has any complexes. I do not think he would claim any intellectual superiority; but he thinks he had the gift of choosing the right men to serve his cause. Inclined to rant a bit about the grievances of his people and to thump the arm of his chair; but soon cools down again. An honest unpretentious man.

He brought me 'sherry' which turned out to be Cherry Brandy—'English drink'—and we drank with growing friendship to a happy future.

Lunch at the hotel in Eger about 1 p.m. Myself alone; then Prince Max and Frank came in. The latter according to Henlein is a 'treuer soldat' but an ass; for this reason, Henlein told me that he would not put him on the negotiating delegation. Frank himself confessed to Max that Hitler had called him a 'damned fool'. I got back to Prague about 6.30.

Monday September 5th. Called to Prime Minister's Office at 10. Dr. Hodza wanted to know result of Hitler-Henlein conversations. I told him; and he asked 'Do you think I should now continue negotiations?' I said, 'Certainly.' He told me very roughly his idea of a genuine 'Selbst-verwaltung'; and said he hoped to issue a communiqué indicating his new basis that night. Lord Runciman was with M. Benes and it was not clear at the moment how far M. Benes was in agreement with the new basis, for he did not mention it at all to Lord Runciman. However in the afternoon and evening, the Cabinet met in M. Benes' presence, and agreed on the

basis; but they published an interim communiqué which M. Cermak brought me at 10.30 p.m.

Lunch with Peto, Lord and Lady Runciman, Prince and Princess Clary. Visit from French Minister. Visit to Swiss Minister to discuss Stopford plan with Bost-Waldeck. Saw Italian secretary at Legation. I have given the general lines of the Henlein-Hitler interview to French and Italians. Dinner with Peto and Count Khuen-Lützwow.

Tuesday September 6th (up to lunch-time). Prince Max arrived at 10. He is seeing Benes at 12. He will then see Kundt and Co. The point is to persuade Kundt to persuade Henlein that the Eight Points really are in the new proposals. Went with Stopford to see Dr. Hodza at 10.30. Hodza wants us to persuade Kundt to accept new proposals as a basis this afternoon and to intimate to him that by basis is meant a foundation upon which a superstructure can be raised. They are not a hard and fast and final plan.

The development therefore is rather complicated; and the scene changes very quickly. F.O. instructions are sometimes out of date by the time they reach us. The general prospects are not unfavourable. But poor little Cermak when he gave us Hodza's Note this morning said: 'Mon coeur tchèque pleure.'

F. ASHTON-GWATKIN

ENCLOSURE

*Note by Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin*

*September 5, 1938*

Herr Henlein was once again most emphatic about the danger to peace which arises from the day to day friction between the Sudeten German population and the Czech State Police. The withdrawal of these police from the places into which they have only lately been introduced, and their replacement by the Gendarmerie and Gemeinde Police, to whom the people are accustomed, is what he regards as the most urgent change of all.

He further believes that it can be done at once; and that it will in fact be easier to maintain order when the State police have gone.

He said that it would make all the difference if the State police could be withdrawn before the S.D.P. Parteitag, which it is proposed to hold about Oct. 15th or 16th.

He said that until this Parteitag he would speak in public as little as possible. He would, however, have to speak at the 'Erntefest' at Leitmeritz on September 25th. If on that occasion the Czech police were as fair and as inconspicuous as possible, it would reassure the minds of himself and his people on this point.

*Letter from Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin (Prague) to Mr. Strang*

[C 10192/1941/18]

LORD RUNCIMAN'S MISSION, PRAGUE, *September 17, 1938*

I have fallen behind with my record. Last bag day (September 12), I had very little time for writing; but I managed to do a letter on the general situation to Sir H. Wilson of which I sent you a copy.

On Monday (September 5) Dr. Hodza told us that the new plan was ready. On Tuesday (September 6) it was communicated to us—first in brief abstract from Dr. Hodza, and then in full (German text), given to Lord Runciman by President Benes about 4.30. We dined with Dr. Preiss of the Zivnostenska Bank, who gave

us some very interesting information, recorded elsewhere. There was a muddle as to whether the Sudetens (Kundt) were to receive the Plan from Dr. Benes or Dr. Hodza. Eventually, it reached Kundt from Hodza early on Wednesday morning (September 7).

The Plan was, as we know, very favourable to the Sudetens—too favourable, in fact, for the extremists and for the German Government, who must have counted on Czech obstruction.

So the sabotage began.

Full Sudeten Delegation *with* Frank came to see us at 5 p.m. to complain of incident at Mährisch Ostrau, where a Sudeten Delegation of deputies had been assaulted by the police and one of the deputies beaten by a policeman. The deputy in question is called Mai, and known among his comrades as 'Siegfried'—a well-known bruiser. The incident was evidently staged by the S.D.P. organization (see Sutton-Pratt's report) in order to interrupt the negotiations until after the Nuremberg Partei-tag.

Lord Runciman pointed out to the Delegation that the way to prevent 'incidents' was to get an agreement; and he appealed to them not to allow local 'incidents' to create a situation that might prejudice world peace. This is recorded in telegrams.

Kundt dined with us at the Alcron, also Prince Max Hohenlohe.

On Thursday (September 8) Lord Runciman saw the President at 10. I called on President of the National Bank (Dr. Engliš). Then went with Lord Runciman to visit Prague Industries Fair. Met Krulisch Randa who told me that the Mährisch Ostrau incident had been faked. Lunch at the Legation. Saw Prince Max Hohenlohe in afternoon who gave me a copy of Schickeltanz's opinion on the proposals, and (to see only) Herr Kier's view on the political aspect, all very favourable to acceptance of the proposals as basis of negotiation—all this fully reported in telegrams.

In the evening, Frank dined with us. He gave us his terms for settlement of Mährisch Ostrau and continuance of negotiations. He authorised my taking them to Dr. Hodza. Frank is a vain man; he was in a nervous and apprehensive state; stayed with us until 2 a.m. and then for two more hours with Prince Max.

On Friday (September 9th) went to Dr. Hodza at 10, and gave him Frank's terms which he says he will accept. Lunch at hotel (with Prince Max). Kundt came at 5, and we arranged for settlement of Mährisch Ostrau and continuance at least of talks about the negotiations on Saturday. Kundt went on to the Prime Minister, and we heard about 9.15 that the Mährisch Ostrau affair was settled.

Saturday (September 10th) an easy day. Lunch with Polish and tea with French Minister. Lord Runciman away with Count Czernin, Basil Newton shooting with Count Ledebourg, Stopford at Karlsbad. Hodza and Kundt started talks at 11; so the world should have a quieter weekend.

Sunday (September 11th) went to visit Prague Fair, with M. Rezac, but was interrupted by notice of a telephone call from Nuremberg which did not eventuate. Left with Swiss Minister (M. and Mme. Bruggmann) to lunch with Prince Max Lobkowicz at Schloss Roudnice; and after lunch was driven over to Rotenhaus (Prince M. Hohenlohe) where I discussed the 'new plan' with Herr Kier, German legal adviser to the Sudetens. The points for further discussion are:—

- (1) Clearer definition of the 'Volksguppe' and its 'Rechtspersönlichkeit'.
- (2) Necessity for a 'Spitzenorgane', i.e. a person or committee of persons at the head of the German group, in whom the rights of the 'Persönlichkeit' can be vested.



- (3) Definition of 'Competenz' between central parliament and local self-administration.
- (4) Provision of a German representation (Curia) in the central parliament and definition of its 'Competenz'.

He also observed that the 'Staatsverteidigungsgesetz' of 1936 could if applied upset the whole arrangement.

At Rotenhaus I also met Herr Heske, an expert on timber and especially tropical African timber. Prince Max has given Kundt Kr. 5,000 to help pay his debts.

Returned to Roudnice at 11.30 and sat up talking with Prince Max Lobkowicz until 3.

There was some trouble at Karlsbad this morning; and a large demonstration of Sudetens for Lord Runciman's benefit descended upon Count Czernin's house and paraded with cries of 'Sieg Heil', 'Heil Hitler' and 'Back to Germany'.

'Lieber Runziman mach uns frei

Von der Tschechoslowakei.'

Monday (September 12), back to Prague. Visit from Dr. Rosche complaining of 'communist' meetings; and from Czerny and Čaha complaining of S.D.P. threatening to take over the local government office in Graslitz. Lunch at Legation (Lord Stamp). Visit with Lord Runciman to Hodza who fears disturbances to-night, and may have to take special military measures to-night, but no mobilisation. Hitler's speech at 7 p.m.; insults to Benes; demands 'Vollkommene Selbstbestimmung'. Saw Kundt at 10 p.m.—an unhappy man; things are going wrong. He could not accept my appeal that a 'gentleman's truce' be publicly announced so as to check 'incidents', but suggested I should call the whole delegation tomorrow.

Spoke to Lord Stamp about a credit for Czechoslovakia (National Bank's scheme).

Tuesday (September 13). Martial Law proclaimed in five or six districts. Things are going very wrong. Sudeten Delegation cancelled their meeting with us at 2 p.m. They are all going to Eger to discuss with Henlein and Frank. Telephoned to Prince Max H. and asked him to go there too. I spoke to Frank at Eger. He demands withdrawal of police, military and martial law. Reported this to Dr. Hodza, who will accept all the demands if Sudetens will send a representative to Prague to negotiate regarding maintenance of order. I reported this to Frank (telephone). He said he must consult Henlein and would reply to Prime Minister direct. Later, I learned that he telephoned about 11 o'clock refusing the Prime Minister's terms.

Meanwhile, I had left Prague about 7 p.m. with Peto for Eger and Asch to submit these terms personally with Lord Runciman's recommendation that they be accepted. Picked up Henderson<sup>1</sup> at Karlsbad 10.30 p.m.—also two 'Begleiters'. Czech police and S.D.P.—and went on to Eger. Quite peaceful. Military barriers at Elbogen and Eger.

Wednesday (September 14). Reached Asch at 1.30 a.m. Henlein was not there. We were presented in his chancery with written notice, breaking off negotiations and disbanding delegation. Went back to Eger to Frank's office (Arbeitsstelle der S.D.P.). Quite a fortress with steel doors. Received by chorus of toughs with 'Heil Hitler'. Frank was so inflated with the eloquence of Nuremberg and his own importance that no commonsense or sense of responsibility were to be got out of him. He was quite friendly personally and we walked the streets of Eger together (at about 3.30 a.m.) observing the soldiers visiting houses for purpose of enquiry.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Ian Henderson was temporarily attached to H.M. Legation in Prague as an Observer.

About 11 a.m. we saw Henlein with Frank and ? Kanzl (deputy from Mährisch Ostrau) at Henlein's house at Asch. Henlein repeated his refusal to treat with Hodza or send anyone to Prague unless Frank's four points were first unconditionally conceded. If so, negotiations could start again, but on a new basis—plebiscite. He did not wish to break off relations with Runciman Mission and thanked us for our efforts. We parted friends.

Lunch at Asch. Met Max Hohenlohe at German frontier about 2.30 p.m. He thinks plebiscite is now the only peaceful way out and says he will go at once to London to explain to Van and others. Henlein, he says, has already gone to Hitler.

Back at Legation by 7.30. Visit from Dr. Preiss with suggestion of a possible compromise with Hitler—reported by telegram. He said that he came to me at Hodza's suggestion, and that Hodza approved his plan—also the German Minister (von Eisenlohr) whom he had seen between 4.30 p.m. and 5.30 p.m. that day. Visit from French Minister at the hotel. Tired out.

Mr. Chamberlain will fly to Berchtesgaden tomorrow to see Hitler. We may have to go too.

More fights and incidents reported.

Thursday September 15. Met Swiss Minister (Bruggmann) at 8.45. Told me that he had learned from S.D.P. (? Neuwirt) that Frank is the villain of the piece and has misled the moderate Wing, sabotaged the negotiations and driven Henlein off the sensible course; now, it is too late for anything but plebiscite. Saw Dr. Preiss again at 12.30 p.m. He will send me his plan in writing. He said that Hodza submitted his resignation last night; Benes tried to get Beran or Malypetr to form a cabinet. Beran refused to assent to any change; Hodza necessary to negotiate with the Slovaks and any cabinet change would weaken the country at this crisis. So Hodza invited to continue—but this has all been reported by telegram, also the financial straits of the country. Lunch at Legation. Dinner at French Legation. Everyone nervous of future events. The international aristocracy e.g. Count Czernin, in great agitation. Instructions came at end of dinner. Chamberlain returning to London tomorrow; wants Lord Runciman to join him there.

Personal telegram of thanks to Lord Runciman and his staff from King George.

Before leaving, Lord Runciman issued an appeal to all parties and persons to refrain from agitation.

On returning to hotel, I learned from journalists that Frank's fortress at Eger had been taken by storm last night after a fight that lasted from 7 to 10 p.m.

Friday September 16. Left with Lord Runciman by air for London at 12 noon. Kundt came to the Legation to say goodbye to us—not half a bad fellow; I'm sorry for him. Smutný (for President) and Czerny (for Foreign Minister) saw us off at the air port. Lord Runciman had seen the President personally at about 10.30 a.m.

The Berchtesgaden Conference apparently resulted in decision for a four Power Conference 'somewhere in North Germany' on Wednesday next.

The above record tells its own story and needs no detailed comment. Our efforts at mediation very nearly succeeded, and would have succeeded but for the mischief of the organised incidents and the Nuremberg speech. For this, Herr Hitler, on the grand scale, and Herr Frank on the small scale, must be held mainly responsible.

F. ASHTON-GWATKIN

[C 10546/1941/18]

LORD RUNCIMAN'S MISSION, PRAGUE, *September 17, 1938*

Herr Kundt came at 4.30 to-day and followed in the main the line of his manifesto, that everything must wait for the result of the Chamberlain-Hitler conversations and that nothing must be done in the meantime to disturb them.

He said that it was still uncertain whether the measures to be taken against the Sudeten German party were to be dissolution (which would involve total loss of mandates, parliamentary and communal) or merely a form of suspension, which would mean the retention of mandates. The question was to be settled by the Standing Committee of Parliament, which had been summoned for 11 o'clock on Monday. He pointed out that it was necessary, if further disturbances were to be avoided, that he and the other Sudeten deputies should retain their rights and be in a position to control their people. He said that the ultimate decision lay with the President and asked that we should see someone near the President and urge on him the importance of taking a moderate course.

He also referred to the danger of house-to-house searches for arms, the suppression of newspapers in the German area which refused to attack Henlein's policy and the victimisation of German officials, particularly in the German University at Prague, where all the staff had been forced (under threat of expulsion) to sign a statement rejecting Henlein's manifesto.

He said that the whereabouts of Henlein, Frank and Sebekowsky was unknown, but that they were thought to be in Germany. Peters is in Prague, but Rosche and Schicketanz are in Dresden, where Rosche went from Asch to visit his wife who is very seriously ill.

He obviously disapproved of the line taken by Henlein and Frank but was very anxious to impress on us that there was no split in the party and that his efforts were directed to preserving the position pending the result of the Chamberlain-Hitler conversations. He seems to regard himself as the only man who can handle things on his side in such a way that a solution may be possible without war.

His anxiety to stand well with the German authorities was shown by his evident satisfaction that his manifesto to-day had been given out in full by the German wireless.

He said that he thought that the situation would remain quiet over the weekend, but he expressed great anxiety as to what action the Government might take on Tuesday or Wednesday, as he had been warned by a friend of his in the President's office to go away from Prague on Tuesday. He had the impression that the President intended something in the nature of a coup d'état, by which he would get rid of Hodza and form a Government of officials, so that the real power would be in the hands of the military.

Asked as to the formation of a new middle party, he denied that anything of this sort was contemplated, adding that of all the names mentioned on his side, he alone was in Prague and would never split the Sudeten ranks in this way. He said that in some districts former Activist officials who had some time ago attached themselves to the Sudeten organisations were now throwing in their lot with the Government, but the movement was not of any importance.

He mentioned in great confidence that his French friend, Professor Bruner, had

<sup>1</sup> This note was enclosed in a letter from Mr. Stopford to Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin dated September 18, 1938.

returned to Prague after a brief visit to Paris, at the request of Daladier and Bonnet, to act as a sort of unofficial rapporteur for them. Bruner had seen the President last night. He had gathered the impression from Bruner that a premature Czechoslovak mobilisation would not be viewed with favour in France.

#### IV

#### LETTER FROM LORD RUNCIMAN TO PRESIDENT BENES<sup>1</sup>

[C 10677/1941/18]

WESTMINSTER, S.W. 1, *September 21, 1938*

My dear President,

When I undertook the task of mediation in the controversy between the Czechoslovak Government and the Sudeten German party, I was, of course, left perfectly free to obtain my own information and to draw my own conclusions. I was under no obligation to issue any kind of report. In present circumstances, however, it may be of assistance to you to have the final views, which I [have] formed as a result of my mission, and certain suggestions which I believed [believe] should be taken into consideration, if anything like a permanent solution were [is] to be found.

The problem of political, social and economic relations between the Teuton and Slav races in the area which is now called Czechoslovakia is one which has existed for many centuries, with periods of acute struggle and periods of comparative peace. It is no new problem, and in its present stage there are at the same time new factors and also old factors which would have to be considered in any detailed review.

When I arrived in Prague at the beginning of August the questions which immediately confronted me were (1) constitutional, (2) political, and (3) economic. The constitutional question was that with which I was immediately and directly concerned. At that time it implied the provision of some degree of home rule for the Sudeten Germans within the Czechoslovak Republic; the question of self-determination had not yet arisen in an acute form. My task was to make myself acquainted with the history of the question, with the principal persons concerned and with the suggestions for a solution proposed by the two sides, viz., by the Sudeten German party in the 'Sketch' submitted to the Czechoslovak Government on the 7th June (which was by way of embodying the eight points of Herr Henlein's speech at Karlsbad), and by the Czechoslovak Government in their draft Nationality Statute, Language Bill and Administrative Reform Bill.

It became clear that neither of these sets of proposals was sufficiently acceptable to the other side to permit further negotiations on this basis, and the negotiations were suspended on the 17th August. After a series of private discussions between the Sudeten leaders and the Czech authorities, a new basis for negotiations was adopted by the Czechoslovak Government and was communicated to me on the 5th September and to the Sudeten leaders on the 6th September. This was the so-called 4th Plan. In my opinion—and I believe in the opinion of the more responsible

<sup>1</sup> This letter was handed to the Czechoslovak Minister in London on September 22. A similar letter was addressed by Lord Runciman to Mr. Chamberlain at 8.30 p.m. on September 21. There are verbal differences between the two letters. These differences are indicated in the text printed above by the inclusion in square brackets of words which occur only in the letter to Mr. Chamberlain. The text printed in Cmd. 5847 is that of the letter to Dr. Benes.

Sudeten leaders—this plan embodied almost all the requirements of the Karlsbad eight points, and with a little clarification and extension could have been made to cover them in their entirety. Negotiations should have at once been resumed on this favourable and hopeful basis; but little doubt remains in my mind that the very fact that they were so favourable operated against their chances with the more extreme members of the Sudeten German party. It is my belief that the incident arising out of the visit of certain Sudeten German Deputies to investigate into the case of persons arrested for arms smuggling at Máhrisch-Osttau was used in order to provide an excuse for the suspension, if not for the breaking off, of negotiations. The Czech Government, however, at once gave way to the demands of the Sudeten German party in this matter and preliminary discussions of the 4th Plan were resumed on the 10th September. Again, I am convinced that this did not suit the policy of the Sudeten extremists and that incidents were provoked and instigated on the 11th September and, with greater effect after Herr Hitler's speech, on the 12th September. As a result of the bloodshed and disturbance thus caused, the Sudeten delegation refused to meet the Czech authorities as had been arranged on the 13th September. Herr Henlein and Herr Frank presented a new series of demands—withdrawal of State police, limitation of troops to their military duties, &c.—which the Czechoslovak Government were again prepared to accept on the sole condition that a representative of the party came to Prague to discuss how order should be maintained. On the night of the 13th September this condition was refused by Herr Henlein, and all negotiations were completely broken off.

It is quite clear that we cannot now go back to the point where we stood two weeks ago, and we have to consider the situation as it now faces us.

With the rejection of the Czechoslovak Government's offer on the 13th September, and with the breaking off of the negotiations by Herr Henlein, my functions as a mediator were, in fact, at an end. Directly and indirectly, the connexion between the chief Sudeten leaders and the Government of the Reich had become the dominant factor in the situation; the dispute was no longer an internal one. It was not part of my function to attempt mediation between Czechoslovakia and Germany.

Responsibility for the final break must, in my opinion, rest upon Herr Henlein and Herr Frank and upon those of their supporters inside and outside the country who were urging them to extreme and unconstitutional action.

I have much sympathy, however, with the Sudeten case. It is a hard thing to be ruled by an alien race, and I have been left with the impression that Czechoslovak rule in the Sudeten areas for the last twenty years, though not actively oppressive, and certainly not 'terroristic,' has been marked by tactlessness, lack of understanding, petty intolerance and discrimination, to a point where the resentment of the German population was inevitably moving in the direction of revolt. The Sudeten Germans felt, too, that in the past they had been given many promises by the Czechoslovak Government, but that little or no action had followed these promises. This experience had induced an attitude of unveiled mistrust of the leading Czech statesmen. I cannot say how far this mistrust is merited or unmerited; but it certainly exists, with the result that, however conciliatory their statements, they inspired [inspire] no confidence in the minds of the Sudeten population. Moreover, in the last elections of 1935 the Sudeten German party polled more votes than any other single party, and they actually formed the second largest party in the State Parliament. They then commanded some forty-four votes in a total Parliament of 300. With subsequent accessions, they are now

the largest party. But they can always be outvoted, and consequently some of them feel that constitutional action is useless for them [and that the Czech democracy is a farce].

Local irritations were added to these major grievances. Czech officials and Czech police, speaking little [or no] German, were appointed in large numbers to purely German districts; Czech agricultural colonists were encouraged to settle on land transferred [confiscated] under the Land Reform in the middle of German populations; for the children of these Czech invaders Czech schools were said to have been built [were built] on a large scale; there is a very general belief that Czech firms were favoured as against German firms in the allocation of State contracts and that the State provided work and relief for Czechs more readily than for Germans. I believe these complaints to be in the main justified. Even as late as the time of my Mission, I could find no readiness on the part of the Czechoslovak Government to remedy them on anything like an adequate scale.

All these, and other, grievances were intensified by the reactions of the economic crisis on the Sudeten industries, which form so important a part of the life of the people. Not unnaturally, the Government were blamed for the resulting impoverishment.

For many reasons, therefore, including the above, the feeling among the Sudeten Germans until about three or four years ago was one of hopelessness. But the rise of Nazi Germany gave them new hope. I regard their turning for help towards their kinsmen and their eventual desire to join the Reich as a natural development in the circumstances.

At the time of my arrival the more moderate Sudeten leaders still desired a settlement within the frontiers of the Czechoslovak State. They realised what war would mean in the Sudeten area, which would itself be the main battlefield. Both nationally and internationally, such a settlement would have been an easier solution than territorial transfer. I did my best to promote it, and up to a point with some success, but, even so, not without misgiving as to whether, when agreement was reached, it could ever be carried out without giving rise to a new crop of suspicions, controversies, accusations and counter-accusations. I felt that any such arrangement would have been temporary, not lasting.

This solution, in the form of what is known as the 'Fourth Plan,' broke down in the circumstances narrated above, the whole situation, internal and external, had changed; and I felt that with this change my mission had come to an end.

When I left Prague on the 16th September, the riots and disturbances in the Sudeten areas, which had never been more than sporadic, had died down. A considerable number of districts had been placed under a régime called 'Standrecht' [amounting to martial law]. The Sudeten leaders, at any rate the more extreme among them, had fled to Germany and were issuing proclamations defying the Czechoslovak Government. I have been credibly informed that, at the time of my leaving, the number of killed on both sides was not more than seventy.

Unless, therefore, Herr Henlein's Freikorps are deliberately encouraged to cross the frontier, I have no reason to expect any notable renewal of incidents and disturbances. In these circumstances the necessity for the presence of State police in these districts should no longer exist. As the State police are extremely unpopular among the German inhabitants, and have constituted one of their chief grievances for the last three years, I consider that they should be withdrawn as soon as possible. I believe that their withdrawal would reduce the causes of wrangles and riots.

Further, it has become self-evident to me that those frontier districts between Czechoslovakia and Germany where the Sudeten population is in an important majority should be given full right of self-determination at once. If some cession is inevitable, as I believe it to be, it is as well that it should be done promptly and without procrastination. There is real danger, even a danger of civil war, in the continuance of a state of uncertainty. Consequently, there are very real reasons for a policy of immediate and drastic action. Any kind of plebiscite or referendum would, I believe, be a sheer formality in respect of these predominantly German areas. A very large majority of their inhabitants desire amalgamation with Germany. The inevitable delay involved in taking a plebiscite vote would only serve to excite popular feelings, with perhaps most dangerous results. I consider, therefore, that those frontier districts should at once be transferred from Czechoslovakia to Germany, and further that measures for their peaceful transfer, including the provision of safeguards for the population during the transfer period, should be arranged forthwith by agreement between the two Governments.

The transfer of these frontier districts does not, however, dispose finally of the question how Germans and Czechs are to live together peacefully in future. Even if all the areas where the Germans have a majority were transferred to Germany, there would still remain in Czechoslovakia a large number of Germans and in the areas transferred to Germany there would still be a certain number of Czechs. Economic connexions are so close that an absolute separation is not only undesirable but inconceivable; and I repeat my conviction that history has proved that in times of peace the two peoples can live together on friendly terms. I believe that it is in the interest of all Czechs and of all Germans alike that these friendly relations should be encouraged to re-establish themselves; and I am convinced that this is the real desire of the average Czech and German. They are alike in being honest, peaceable, hard-working and frugal folk. When political friction has been removed on both sides, I believe that they can settle down quietly.

For those portions of the territory, therefore, where the German majority is not so important, I recommend that an effort be made to find a basis for local autonomy within the frontiers of the Czechoslovak Republic on the lines of the 'Fourth Plan,' modified so as to meet the new circumstances created by the transfer of the preponderantly German areas. As I have already said, there is always a danger that agreement reached in principle may lead to further divergencies in practice. But I think that in a more peaceful future this risk can be minimised.

This brings me to the political side of the problem, which is concerned with the question of the integrity and security of the Czechoslovak Republic, especially in relation to her immediate neighbours. I believe that here the problem is one of removing a centre of intense political friction from the middle of Europe. For this purpose it is necessary permanently to provide that the Czechoslovak State should live at peace with all her neighbours and that her policy, internal and external, should be directed to that end. Just as it is essential for the international position of Switzerland that her policy should be entirely neutral, so an analogous policy is necessary for Czechoslovakia—not only for her own future existence, but for the peace of Europe.

In order to achieve this, I recommend—

- (1) That those parties and persons in Czechoslovakia who have been deliberately encouraging a policy antagonistic to Czechoslovakia's neighbours should be forbidden by the Czechoslovak Government to continue their agitations;

and that if necessary legal measures should be taken to bring such agitations to an end.

- (2) That the Czechoslovak Government should so remodel her foreign relations as to give assurance to her neighbours that she will in no circumstances attack them or enter into any aggressive action against them arising from obligations to other States.
- (3) That the principal Powers, acting in the interests of the peace of Europe, should give to Czechoslovakia guarantees of assistance in case of unprovoked aggression against her.
- (4) That a commercial treaty on preferential terms should be negotiated between Germany and Czechoslovakia if this seems advantageous to the economic interests of the two countries.

This leads me to the third question which lay within the scope of my enquiry, viz., the economic problem. This problem centres on the distress and unemployment in the Sudeten German areas, a distress which has persisted since 1930, and is due to various causes. It constitutes a suitable background for political discontent. It is a problem which exists; but to say that the Sudeten German question is entirely or even in the main an economic one is misleading. If a transfer of territory takes place, it is a problem which will for the most part fall to the German Government to solve.

If the policy which I have outlined above recommends itself to those immediately concerned in the present situation, I would further suggest: (a) That a representative of the Sudeten German people should have a permanent seat in the Czechoslovak Cabinet. (b) That a commission under a neutral chairman should be appointed to deal with the question of the delimitation of the area to be transferred to Germany and also with controversial points immediately arising from the carrying out of any agreement which may be reached. (c) That an international force be organised to keep order in the districts which are to be transferred pending actual transfer, so that Czechoslovak State police, as I have said above, and also Czechoslovak troops, may be withdrawn from this area.

I wish to close this letter by recording my appreciation of the personal courtesies, hospitality and assistance which I and my staff received from the Government authorities, especially from you [Dr. Benes] and Dr. Hodza, from the representatives of the Sudeten German party with whom we came in contact, and from a very large number of other people in all ranks of life whom we met during our stay in Czechoslovakia.

Yours very sincerely,  
RUNCIMAN OF DOXFORD



### APPENDIX III

## Text of the Prime Minister's Statement to the Press on September 11, 1938<sup>1</sup>

[C 9644/4770/18]

After emphasising that the gathering was a confidential one, and that nothing was to be quoted as official, the Prime Minister said:

There has been a growing feeling of anxiety in the country at the evident approach of a critical situation out of which war might possibly arise.

War in these days is something different from what it has been in the past. Even in 1914 war was an affair, to begin with at any rate, of military and naval forces, but now it is something which might in the very first few hours affect the civilian population. Thereby it becomes an even more dreadful and horrible thing than it was before.

The Government's policy and the Government's efforts are directed all the time to the avoidance of any such catastrophe as that.

We have recognised from the first that in this Czechoslovakian question there lay the possibilities of the most serious consequences.

We have felt, however, that difficult as the situation was, it ought not to be one impossible of solution by peaceful discussion and negotiation.

When I say ought not to be one, I recognise that when feelings become exacerbated and especially when racial animosities are present, as they are in this case, it is very difficult to get the two protagonists to maintain a reasonable attitude and a deadlock is quite likely to occur.

It was when we saw the situation becoming critical that we proposed that a mediator and an investigator whose personality and name would command confidence should go out and see whether he could help. Lord Runciman expressed his willingness to undertake that difficult and thankless task and he was accepted by both sides.

I think he was accepted on both sides at first with some mental reservations, but by his frank and impartial attitude he succeeded with remarkable rapidity in gaining the confidence both of the Czechs and of the Sudeten Germans.

No one who has followed closely the proceedings out there can have failed to see how valuable his services had been in smoothing over difficulties, in re-starting negotiations whenever there was a setback and finally in so contriving matters that fresh proposals have been put forward which certainly go a very long way to meet the demands of the Sudeten Germans and in fact go very much further than anybody would at one time have supposed it possible for the Czech Government to go.

The result of these last proposals is that the gap between the two sides has been appreciably narrowed and I think we must say that although it may be necessary for a good deal more negotiation to take place for the purpose of elucidating these proposals or modifying them to some extent, there could be no justification now for the abandonment of these negotiations in favour of a more violent solution.

Indeed I think that any attempt to use force after so great an advance towards

<sup>1</sup> See No. 837, note 1.

a solution by peaceful methods would incur universal condemnation throughout the world.

It is possible that even now there may be a further setback in these negotiations or a further apparent deadlock, but Lord Runciman is still on the spot and the same qualities which have enabled him to overcome difficulties of that kind already will be available if they should be required again.

Therefore, whatever difficulties arise in the course of further talks between the Czechoslovakian Government and the Sudeten German leaders, in the British Government's opinion and the general opinion, it is thought, of the world, there is no reason why efforts by mediation or otherwise to find a peaceful solution should be abandoned.

A question which is constantly canvassed not only in this country but elsewhere is whether there is a full appreciation in Germany of the possible consequences of a forcible intervention in Czechoslovakia.

On repeated occasions the British Government has expressed as clearly as possible its view that if aggression were resorted to, that might well cause the involving of France in the conflict, since France is bound by treaty obligations to come to the assistance of Czechoslovakia in the event of an unprovoked aggression.

On March 24 in the House of Commons I said in unmistakable terms that it was impossible to set a limit to the scope of the conflict if those events took place or to say what Governments might not ultimately be involved.

It was quite clear from that statement that we contemplated the possibility that this country could not stand aside if a general conflict were to take place in which the security of France might be menaced.

That position has been repeated since by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Lanark speech.

Sir John Simon's speech, contrary perhaps to the expectations of many in this country, was exceedingly well reported in Germany and no doubt it created a considerable impression there.

But as time goes on circumstances change to some extent and we do not exclude the possibility that memories grow dim even of important things so recently said.

Undoubtedly it is of the first importance that the German Government should be under no illusions in this matter and that they should not, as it has been suggested they might, count upon it that a brief and successful campaign against Czechoslovakia could be safely embarked upon without the danger of the subsequent intervention first of France and later of this country.

But although in view of what has been said already it hardly seems possible to us that in any responsible quarters in Germany there could be any doubt on that subject, nevertheless there have been opportunities for the British Ambassador during his stay at Nuremberg to meet all the principal leaders of Germany with the exception of Herr Hitler himself, and from the full reports which he has given us of his conversations we have every reason to feel confident that our views have been conveyed fully to the proper quarters.

There are two other things I want to say.

First, on this occasion as on every other occasion when the interests of the British Empire as a whole are concerned, we have taken special pains to keep in the closest touch with the Dominions.

Secondly we have preserved throughout our historical and traditional association with France—our nearest neighbour, the other great democracy and the country with whose integrity and security our own is so closely bound up.

I don't want you to think that we take an unduly pessimistic view of the situation as it is today. It is a serious situation, but it is not one in which I think we need take too gloomy a view.

We shall all await the statement which Herr Hitler is going to make tomorrow night with a certain anxiety, realising how much may turn upon the nature of his speech.

But, after all, Herr Hitler has repeatedly expressed his own desire for peace and it would be a mistake to assume that those declarations were insincere.

There is one other country whose sympathy is particularly precious to us at all times but especially in times like this and that is the United States of America.

I am happy to think that our relations with that great country were never more friendly or more sympathetic in my experience than they are today and we have felt that we owe it to her to keep her fully informed as we have done throughout of our views on the European situation.

If out of all this there should come another great conflict in Europe it would indeed be a tragic disaster.

In our view it is an avoidable disaster and the British Government intend to leave no effort untried that will serve to avert it.

## APPENDIX IV

### Unofficial German Approaches, August–September, 1938

[The documents in this Appendix supplement the references in Nos. 631, 658, 775, and 1216 to unofficial German approaches to His Majesty's Government during August and September, 1938.

On August 16 Sir N. Henderson telegraphed that, according to information given to the Military Attaché, 'a Herr von Kleist' would come by air to London on August 18, as an emissary of the moderates in the General Staff. His mission would be 'to obtain material with which to convince the Chancellor of the strong probability of Great Britain intervening should Germany take violent action against Czechoslovakia'. Sir N. Henderson understood that Herr von Kleist carried introductions to 'leading politicians'. In Sir N. Henderson's view 'it would be unwise for him to be received in official quarters'.

The Foreign Office also had information that Herr von Kleist was coming to England as a representative of the old German Conservative Party to which he had formerly belonged: that he wanted to see Mr. Churchill and Lord Lloyd, and that the German War Office approved the purpose of his visit. The Secretary of State considered that no initiative should be taken in official quarters to see Herr von Kleist, but that, if he asked to be received in such quarters, he should not be rebuffed. The Foreign Office also informed the Prime Minister of Herr von Kleist's visit. Herr von Kleist, after arriving in England, asked to see Sir R. Vansittart. Document (i) in this appendix is Sir R. Vansittart's record of Herr von Kleist's statements to him.

Document (ii) is a letter from the Prime Minister to Lord Halifax commenting on Sir R. Vansittart's report and on a conversation with Major-General Lord Hutchison of Montrose.

Document (iii) is a report sent to Lord Halifax by Mr. Churchill reporting his conversation with Herr von Kleist. Mr. Churchill enclosed with this report a copy of a letter which he had given to Herr von Kleist. In a covering letter to Lord Halifax Mr. Churchill explained that Herr von Kleist intended to show the letter to 'various Generals in the highest commands, particularly Beck'. Mr. Churchill added: 'You are committed to nothing except that when I rang you up to ask you about the policy of the Government you informed me that it was unchanged from that of March 24.'

Document (iv) is a letter from Mr. R. C. Skrine Stevenson, Senior League of Nations Adviser in the Foreign Office, reporting a conversation with M. Burckhardt, League of Nations High Commissioner at Danzig, in which the latter gave an account of an interview with Herr von Weizsäcker. This interview is referred to in the main text above (No. 775).]

(i)

*Note of a Conversation between Sir R. Vansittart and Herr von Kleist*

[C 8520/1941/18]

*August 18, 1938*

I spoke to you<sup>1</sup> this morning about Herr von Kleist. In the afternoon about 4 o'clock I received an application from him to see me. He said that I was one of

<sup>1</sup> This minute was addressed to the Secretary of State.

the few people in this country with whom he wished to speak and would be able to speak freely. I had to decide at once whether I would see him or not and I came to the conclusion that it would be a mistake to refuse to see him, and I therefore did so. I need hardly add that I did not see him at the Foreign Office.

Herr von Kleist at once opened up with the utmost frankness and gravity. He said (and this coincides with a great deal of other information which I have given you from entirely different sources) that war was now a certainty unless we stopped it. I said 'do you mean an extreme danger?' He answered: 'No, I do not mean an extreme danger, I mean a complete certainty.' I said, 'do you mean to say that the extremists are now carrying Hitler with them?' He said: 'No, I do not mean that. There is only one real extremist and that is Hitler himself. He is the great danger and he is doing this entirely on his own. He receives a great deal of encouragement from Herr von Ribbentrop who keeps telling him that when it comes to the showdown neither France nor England will do anything.' (You will remember that I gave you the same information from an entirely different source this morning as to Ribbentrop's present attitude and influence.)

Herr von Kleist continued: 'I do not want to bother to talk about Herr von Ribbentrop. He is nothing but an evil Yes-man and although his influence is now cast in the wrong direction by encouraging Hitler he is not of sufficient consequence to matter. Hitler has made up his mind for himself. All the Generals in the German Army who are my friends know it and they *alone* know it for a certainty and know the date at which the mine is to be exploded.'

I said: 'Do you mean that such people as Goebbels and Himmler are not pushing Hitler in that direction as well?' Herr von Kleist said, 'I repeat that I discount them. Hitler has taken this decision by himself. I am doubtful whether Goebbels and Himmler are really pushing in that direction. In any case they do not really matter.'

I said: 'What about Goering?' Herr von Kleist replied: 'Goering would sooner avoid war but he will not and cannot do anything to stop it and that goes for my friends in the Army also although they are much more opposed to war than is Goering.' I said: 'Do you mean *all* the Generals?' He replied: 'Yes, all and without exception, and I include even General von Reichenau who has hitherto passed for being the most extreme and forward of them all. They are all dead against war but they will not have the power to stop it unless they get encouragement and help from outside. As I have already told you, they know the date and will be obliged to march at that date.'

I said: 'What, according to you, is the date?' He laughed and said: 'Why of course you know it.' I disclaimed any such knowledge. Herr von Kleist said: 'Well anyhow, your Prime Minister knows it.' I said I did not think he was right there and I added that I was questioning him about the date that he had in mind because it seemed to me a matter of some importance if, as he thought, the adventure could still be stopped, because a good deal must naturally turn in such a case upon the amount of time that we had ahead of us. Herr von Kleist appeared still very incredulous that we should not be more exactly informed as to Hitler's timetable, but when I questioned him again he said: 'After the 27th September it will be too late.' (You will remember that in a letter that Lord Lloyd sent to you he mentioned that a friend of his in army circles had told him that the 28th September was the date.)

I said: 'If you feel really sure that the date you mention is the appointed time, up till what time do you think that any deterrent influence could be exercised? by which I mean by what time will the preparations for adventure have gone too far for us possibly to stop it, if, as you think, we could?' He replied: 'I think you

could stop it up till the middle of September, but it would be still safer to stop it before the Party Day.'

I said: 'What means do you recommend for stopping it?' He replied: 'There are two. Firstly, since Hitler now believes that the attitude of France and England in May was entirely bluff, you must make him understand that this is not the case.' I said: 'The French have already proclaimed their intentions very clearly on at least half a dozen public occasions, and the Prime Minister spoke very clearly on March 24th in the House of Commons.' He replied: 'That is not enough. Those impressions have waned and, as I have already told you, Ribbentrop keeps telling Hitler that from sure sources he knows that England and France would do nothing.' I said: 'What is your second remedy?' He replied: 'A great part of the country is sick of the present régime and even a part that is not sick of it is terribly alarmed at the prospect of war, and the conditions to which war will lead them. I have already told you that the army, including Reichenau, is unanimous against it if they can get any support. I wish that one of your leading statesmen would make a speech which would appeal to this element in Germany, emphasising the horrors of war and the inevitably general catastrophe to which it would lead.' I said: 'As regards the second part of your remedy I should have thought that the proposal would have the contrary effect, that any attempt on the part of any foreigner overtly to divide the country would be more calculated to unite it and would prove a handicap rather than an assistance to those who wish to avoid disaster.'

Herr von Kleist did not abandon his idea in spite of this dissuasion and on the other hand he adhered very firmly and persistently to his first remedy which, as you will remember, is the same as that which I have been reporting to you as being the desire and the almost open request of a number of other German moderates who have been in communication with me during these past weeks.

Herr von Kleist is seeing Lord Lloyd tonight and Mr. Winston Churchill tomorrow. He does not wish to have any contacts with people influential in the press. He says that if Hitler carries the day and plunges his country into war he will anyhow be one of the first to be killed, and that he has anyhow come out of the country with a rope round his neck to stake his last chance of life on preventing the adventure. He added further that he did not wish to see any members of the Labour Party. He knew already what their feelings were and what they would say to him and he did not wish to take any additional and unnecessary risks as regards his own life which was already in extreme danger. He had already been imprisoned three times on various pretexts. He is going back to Germany on Tuesday and it is possible that he may ask to see me again between now and then, but he repeated that with the exception of myself and one or two others he did not wish to enlarge the circle of his contacts. He had come over here to give the warning that we were no longer in danger of war but in the presence of the certainty of it, and to risk his own existence in doing so. He talked a good deal about the general lines of the policy of the party he represented (he said that he was 'a Conservative, a Prussian and a Christian') and the lines of the policy he would like to see pursued were essentially reasonable. I do not, however, think that it is necessary to burden this paper with them. He added that there was no prospect whatever of any reasonable policy being followed by Germany so long as Hitler was at the head of affairs but that he believed that if war was avoided on this occasion as it had been in May, it would be the prelude to the end of the régime and a renaissance of a Germany with whom the world could deal.

In conclusion he said that his exit from Germany had been facilitated by his friends in the army on whose unanimity he had enlarged earlier and that he had long been on the most intimate terms with them. They had taken the risk and he had taken the risk of coming out of Germany at this crucial moment although he had no illusions as to the fate that awaited him if he failed; but he made it abundantly clear, as I have said earlier, that they alone could do nothing without assistance from outside on the lines he had suggested.

R. V.

(ii)

*Letter from Mr. Neville Chamberlain to Viscount Halifax*

CHEQUERS, BUTLER'S CROSS, AYLESBURY, BUCKS., August 19, 1938

My dear Edward,

Just before leaving London this morning my Secretary brought me Van's account of his talk with Von Kleist. After reading it through I decided to bring it along with me to think over it a little more.

Early this morning I received an urgent request from Hutch<sup>1</sup> who telephoned that he must see me as he had important information to communicate. I saw him at 9.30. He said he had contacts with many Germans and he named one in particular but the name was unknown to me previously. He said this man was 'in' with various generals and had written to say that Hitler meant business this time and it was essential if he were to be stopped that we should approach him and come to some understanding with him forthwith. When I said that I doubted if Hitler had yet made up his mind what he would do Hutch said that that was also the view of his correspondent. But Hitler would have to make up his mind before he spoke at Nürnberg. After that it would be too late to intervene.

There was really nothing new in what Hutch had to say (he left a long memorandum of his views) but perhaps it may usefully be compared with Von Kleist.

I take it that Von Kleist is violently anti-Hitler and is extremely anxious to stir up his friends in Germany to make an attempt at its overthrow. He reminds me of the Jacobites at the Court of France in King William's time and I think we must discount a good deal of what he says.

Nevertheless I confess to some feeling of uneasiness and I don't feel sure that we ought not to do something. His second remedy, that one of us should make a speech or give an interview in which we should, to use Van's phrase, be 'more explicit' than on May 21, I reject. At any rate at present.

The first remedy is less committal and there are various ways in which we might convince Hitler that the position is no less serious than it was in May. One, which rather commends itself to me, is to send for Henderson and take care that everyone knew it. The procedure I suggest for your consideration is as follows.

Inform Henderson now of the substance of what Van has heard without of course disclosing the source. Ask him to comment on it and tell him that we are sufficiently impressed to be inclined to make some warning gesture. That at present we do not propose going beyond sending for him. That the date on which we should wish to see him would be Monday 29th inst.<sup>2</sup> and that on receiving final instructions to come he should let it be known that he was sent for to consult about the serious position in connection with Czecho.

<sup>1</sup> Major-General Lord Hutchison of Montrose.

<sup>2</sup> Sir N. Henderson was called to London for consultation on this date. See No. 678.

I think it rather a bad sign that Hitler has made no response to our communication<sup>1</sup> to him.

I shall be here till Monday morning when I return to Downing St. till Wednesday afternoon. Perhaps you would turn over my suggestion and let me know what you think of it either here or there.

Yours ever,  
N. CHAMBERLAIN

<sup>1</sup> See No. 608.

(iii)

(a)

*Note of a Conversation between Mr. Winston Churchill and Herr von Kleist*

K. started by saying that he thought that an attack upon Czechoslovakia was imminent and would most likely occur between the Nuremberg Conference and the end of September. C. asked if an ultimatum would be sent and was told 'No'. The troops and air forces would be asked to attack straightaway. K. continued there was nobody in Germany who wanted war except H. who regarded the events of May 21 as a personal rebuff whose recurrence he must avoid and whose memory he must obliterate. Even Goering, though he would not say a word against war, is not keen on it. The generals, including Reichenau, are for peace and K. believed that if only they could receive a little encouragement they might refuse to march. At least half of them were convinced that an attack upon Czechoslovakia would involve Germany in war with France and Britain. But there was extreme dread of facing H. personally on account of his fury and his power.

C. observed that these generals were correct in their view and that though many people in England were not prepared to say in cold blood that they would march for Czechoslovakia, there would be few who would wish to stand idly by once the fighting started. He pointed out that the successive Nazi coups had hardened public opinion in Britain. Our patience in Spain was not so much a sign of weakness as of the conserving of resources for the real struggle which must come if fighting started in Central Europe; he added that public opinion in the United States was immeasurably more advanced than in 1914. He stressed the fact that those who thought as he did were anti-Nazi and anti-war, and not anti-German.

K. said that he knew what C. said was true and that he would continue to emphasise these facts to his friends. He thought, however, that some gesture was needed to crystallize the wide-spread and indeed, universal anti-war sentiment in Germany. Particularly was it necessary to do all that was possible to encourage the generals who alone had the power to stop war. He realised the difficulties of action by a democratic government, but inquired whether it was not possible for private members of parliament by letters in the press or by private communications to friends in Germany to stress the dangers of the situation, and to appeal to the peaceful elements in Germany to assert themselves without delay. He was convinced that in the event of the generals deciding to insist on peace, there would be a new system of government within forty-eight hours. Such a government, probably of a monarchist character, could guarantee stability and end the fear of war for ever.

C. stated that once the world was assured of a peaceful tolerant and law-abiding government in Germany such questions as the colonies and commercial treaties would be much easier of adjustment. Neither Britain nor France would prove ungenerous. On the contrary, there would be a cordial desire to mark the



end of the crisis in a manner that would strengthen a peaceful regime, once the shadow of aggression and war had passed from Europe. At this point K. mentioned that his friends were not greatly concerned about the colonies, but that the Polish Corridor was the matter that affected them most. C. said that before H. had started, he (C.) had always wished to see this difficulty cleared up; but that now it had been officially dropped by Germany, and this was certainly not the moment to discuss it. It would only throw Poland on to the side of H. K. recognised this, but said it was the real grievance in the military mind.

C. told K. that his conversations with V. had been reported to the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister and that the former had authorised C. to state that the Prime Minister's declaration in the House of Commons on March 24 still stood. C. undertook to embody this assurance together with his own view in the form of a letter.

(b)

*Letter given by Mr. Winston Churchill to Herr von Kleist*

*August 19, 1938*

My dear Sir,

I have welcomed you here as one who is ready to run risks to preserve the peace of Europe and to achieve a lasting friendship between the British, French and German peoples for their mutual advantage.

I am sure that the crossing of the frontier of Czecho-Slovakia by German armies or aviation in force will bring about a renewal of the world war. I am as certain as I was at the end of July 1914 that England will march with France and certainly the United States is now strongly anti-Nazi. It is difficult for democracies in advance and in cold blood to make precise declarations, but the spectacle of an armed attack by Germany upon a small neighbour and the bloody fighting that will follow will rouse the whole British Empire and compel the gravest decisions.

Do not, I pray you, be misled upon this point. Such a war, once started, would be fought out like the last to the bitter end, and one must consider not what might happen in the first few months, but where we should all be at the end of the third or fourth year. It would be a great mistake to imagine that the slaughter of the civil population following upon air-raids would prevent the British Empire from developing its full war power; though, of course, we should suffer more at the beginning than we did last time. But the submarine is practically mastered by scientific methods and we shall have the freedom of the seas and the support of the greater part of the world. The worse the air-slaughter at the beginning, the more inexpiable would be the war. Evidently, all the great nations engaged in the struggle, once started, would fight on for victory or death.

As I felt you should have some definite message to take back to your friends in Germany who wish to see peace preserved and who look forward to a great Europe in which England, France and Germany will be working together for the prosperity of the wage-earning masses, I communicated with Lord Halifax. His Lordship asks me to say on his behalf that the position of His Majesty's Government in relation to Czecho-Slovakia is defined by the Prime Minister's speech in the House of Commons on March 24, 1938. The speech must be read as a whole, and I have no authority to select any particular sentence out of its context; but I must draw your attention to the final passage on this subject—Columns 1405-6, Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates 1937-8:—

'Where peace and war are concerned, legal obligations are not alone involved, and, if war broke out, it would be unlikely to be confined to those who have assumed such obligations. It would be quite impossible to say where it would end and what Governments might become involved. The inexorable pressure of facts might well prove more powerful than formal pronouncements, and in that event it would be well within the bounds of probability that other countries, besides those which were parties to the original dispute, would almost immediately become involved. This is especially true in the case of two countries like Great Britain and France, with long associations of friendship, with interests closely interwoven, devoted to the same ideals of democratic liberty, and determined to uphold them.'

May I say that, speaking for myself, I believe that a peaceful and friendly solution of the Czecho-Slovak problem would pave the way for the true reunion of our countries on the basis of the greatness and the freedom of both.

(iv)

*Letter from Mr. Skrine Stevenson to Mr. Strang*

[C 9525/1941/18]

GENEVA, September 8, 1938

Dear William,

Carl Burckhardt came and saw me this afternoon. He began by telling me that Forster<sup>1</sup> after his return from England had avoided him and had even gone out of his way not to meet him in the street. This had gone on for some time until the 31st August, when he had sent a message to the effect that he would like Burckhardt to come to his country house. On arrival there Burckhardt found Forster in a state of exaltation and the ensuing conversation was so extravagant that Burckhardt had difficulty in believing that Forster was in his right mind. The latter had spoken openly of the forthcoming German attack on Czechoslovakia, in the course of which he said Prague would be laid in ruins in a few hours by successive attacks by 1,500 bombing planes. He had said that Italy would undoubtedly march with Germany, that France would probably not march and that England had no intention whatever of doing so in any circumstances. He had also said that the last war had been thrust on Germany because other nations wished it. 'This time it is we who want it.' Herr Forster had also invited M. Chodacki, the Polish Commissioner-General, to come to tea with him the same afternoon and had evidently intended him to be present at this exordium. M. Chodacki however was absent from Danzig and could not accept the invitation. During part of the conversation, and that the most extravagant part, the President of the Bank of Danzig was present. On leaving the Gauleiter's house Burckhardt was overtaken on the steps by the Bank President, who deplored the extravagance of the Gauleiter's language.

Burckhardt saw Herr Greiser<sup>2</sup> the same evening and repeated to him more or less what Herr Forster had said. Herr Greiser was much disturbed and referred once again to certain activities of the Gauleiter in the course of the preceding weeks,

<sup>1</sup> Gauleiter of Danzig. For his visit to London see Volume I of this Series, Appendix V.

<sup>2</sup> President of the Danzig Senate.

notably his organisation of a kind of national register for the purposes of military service and his arrangements for the removal of gold from Danzig into Germany. (Carl Burckhardt then explained to me that when Herr Greiser had first told him of these activities on the part of the Gauleiter and had announced his intention of arresting him, Burckhardt counselled him to go slow, and so far as the military service was concerned, pay a private visit to General von Brauschitsch. He also advised him to see the Minister of Finance in regard to the gold question. This advice Herr Greiser had taken with complete success, for the Gauleiter's orders had been rescinded.)

Shortly after his conversation with Herr Forster, Carl Burckhardt left for Berlin. There he saw someone whom he does not wish to name. It will be obvious however to you after you have read this letter of whom he is speaking.<sup>3</sup>

Carl Burckhardt recounted the conversation he had had with Forster and told his interlocutor that he had shown Herr Forster that he did not believe that he (Herr Forster) was talking sense as he knew that such ideas were not those of Herr Hitler. At that his interlocutor threw up his hands and said 'But unfortunately those are exactly the ideas of the Führer.' He went on to say that the Führer was completely sequestered by Herr Ribbentrop and Herr Himmler, who had joined forces. Herr Ribbentrop had regained his position of ascendancy. He and Herr Himmler did nothing but exacerbate the already extravagant state of mind in which the Führer was. They did this by keeping from him any who might give him sensible advice, by showing him only those criticisms from the foreign press which they knew would irritate him and particularly cartoons of himself, and in general by persuading him that he had nothing to fear from Great Britain and little to fear from France.

General von Beck had taken his courage in both hands and had gone to Hitler with his resignation ready in his pocket. He had told Hitler the truth and had then offered his resignation, which had been accepted.

Burckhardt's interlocutor had also tried to tell Herr Hitler the truth. The latter refused to listen to him and his position had as a result become very shaky. General von Beck had come to him and told him about his resignation. Burckhardt's interlocutor had then announced his intention of resigning, but had agreed not to do so at the urgent request of General von Beck.

Burckhardt's interlocutor also told him that Admiral Horthy had been asked to speak plainly to the Führer. He had done so and on being asked the result by Burckhardt's interlocutor had replied 'I began to speak to him and I had to stop in the middle of what I was saying, as I am, after all, the head of a State and it was not seemly that I should be thus spoken to, for in the middle of a sentence the Führer screamed at me "Unsinn! Schweigen Sie!"'<sup>4</sup>

Burckhardt asked his interlocutor what, if anything, could be done. The latter had said that the only thing he could think of was something which he, in his position, hesitated to put forward. He had, however, thought it over very carefully, and in the conflict of loyalties had decided that his sense of patriotism overcame his loyalty to his chief, whose influence on the Führer he regarded as fatal. He had therefore come to the conclusion that the only method of bringing Hitler to see the truth would be a personal letter from the Prime Minister showing that if an attack were made by Germany on Czechoslovakia, a war would start in which Great Britain would inevitably be on the opposite side to Germany. Such a letter should

<sup>3</sup> The person in question was Herr von Weizsäcker.

<sup>4</sup> i.e. "Nonsense! Shut up!"

be brought by a personal messenger, who should see that the Führer received a correct translation of it.

Burckhardt's interlocutor said he could not obviously suggest that to H.M. Ambassador. He had therefore taken the course of asking him, Burckhardt, to act as intermediary. He impressed on Burckhardt the extreme urgency of the matter and the necessity that the letter should reach Herr Hitler before the end of the party celebrations at Nuremberg.

Burckhardt had said that this was a very difficult thing to ask of the Prime Minister. The latter would undoubtedly hesitate long before engaging his country in the manner suggested. Burckhardt's interlocutor said he fully appreciated this, but was convinced that Herr Hitler had been fatally misled by his Chief in regard to Great Britain, and he could see no other way of bringing the truth home.

Carl Burckhardt, who has known his interlocutor for a long time and appreciates his absolute loyalty in ordinary circumstances to his superiors, was so much impressed by this conversation that he got into his car and drove 900 kilometres in one day to Berne to recount the conversation to George Warner.<sup>5</sup>

He begged most insistently that complete secrecy should be preserved about the mission with which he had been entrusted. He insisted that the name of his interlocutor should not be put on paper, as it was not fair to him that it should remain on record anywhere. I promised to respect his wishes, but as you will have seen, I have in fact given it away.

Burckhardt mentioned one other piece of interesting information which he had received from another source, but one in which he had every confidence. This was that General Balbo had been asked to speak plainly to Herr Hitler. He had done so and had moreover shown Herr Hitler quite clearly that he could not expect active support from Italy. The good done by this had, however, been undone by Signor Mussolini himself, who, having until August discouraged Herr Hitler from going ahead in regard to Czechoslovakia had now started to encourage him. This information came in fact from General von Kistler, General Officer Commanding, East Prussia, who had also told Burckhardt that the German Government had received, through the Italians, a report to the effect that the Japanese had formed a very low opinion of the Soviet troops in the recent fighting in the Far East. This report had been immediately brought to the notice of Herr Hitler by Ribbentrop.

Burckhardt further told me that General Goering, all the Ministers to whom he had spoken lately, and these included the Ministers of Agriculture, Finance and Commerce, and the General Staff, including General von Keitel, were without exception opposed to any attack by Germany on Czechoslovakia. I asked him whether in these circumstances the army would march if Herr Hitler gave the word. He said it undoubtedly would, but that in his view at the first defeat the régime would crumble.

After having talked to Burckhardt this afternoon, I took the opportunity of asking Oliver Harvey, who rang me up, whether George Warner's telegram of last Monday<sup>6</sup> (which I had not seen) had been given really serious consideration. He said that it had been taken into consideration with other elements in the situation. I gathered from him, however, that George Warner's telegram was a short one. I therefore feared that a great deal of background had necessarily been omitted and I asked whether any further details would be of interest. He assured me that

<sup>5</sup> Sir G. Warner was H.M. Minister at Berne.

<sup>6</sup> No. 775.



they would. Hence this letter, which in view of its interest and urgency I am sending by special messenger tonight. For you will agree that it is quite unprecedented that a very high official of the proved loyalty of Burckhardt's interlocutor should take a step of this kind.

Yours ever,

R. C. SKRINE STEVENSON